



Athlete Leadership University Courses & Roles

Overview:

Since 1989, Special Olympics Pennsylvania (SOPA) has offered athletes of all abilities the opportunity to be trained and actively serve in meaningful leadership capacities at the local and state level. While training is a very important part in an Athlete Leader's experience, the opportunities they can pursue beyond the training is what makes their role considered meaningful.

Athlete Leadership University Courses & Potential Roles:

Special Olympics Pennsylvania offers 3 different trainings for its Athlete Leadership University curriculum. All new Athlete Leaders, as well as ones beginning a new role that were trained prior to 2022, will also require the completion of the Introduction to Athlete Leadership and Understanding Leadership Courses. These are virtual trainings that take place in the weeks leading into a session. All three roles require athletes to be at least 16 years of age or older. Local Teams should also identify individuals that can read, write and speak at minimum, a 5th grade level, have no recent history of misbehavior and actively participate in at least one community-based sport each year. Athletes that participate in Unified Champion Schools (UCS) may also attend Athlete Leadership University if they meet all the criteria mentioned.

- **Introduction to Athlete Leadership:** A broad introduction to what both Special Olympics and Athlete Leadership are all about.
 - Focuses on the three guiding principles of Athlete Leadership:
 - Education and Awareness
 - Training
 - Leadership Positions
- **Understanding Leadership:** A continuation of Introduction to Athlete Leadership, focusing on different behaviors and skills commonly associated with Leadership.
 - Athlete Leaders are also asked to identify what they wish to accomplish post Athlete Leadership University, whose help they may need and how they plan on overcoming obstacles they may face.
- **Athlete Representative:** An Athlete Representative is responsible for working with athletes, volunteers and staff in identifying and completing one of the following priorities each year with a SMART Goal in mind:
 - Start an Athlete Leadership Team (ALT)
 - Example SMART Goal: We will recruit 10 new athletes to our Athlete Leadership Team by visiting training sites and speaking to all interested athletes and their families.
 - Identify Athlete Leaders
 - Example SMART Goal: We will aim to have at least two athletes trained as Athlete Representatives, three trained as Global Messengers and one trained as Health and Fitness Coordinators. We will do this by visiting training sites and speaking to all interested athletes and their families.
 - Recruitment of Athletes/Volunteers
 - Example SMART Goal: We will aim to recruit at least 20 new volunteers to coach different sports and/or serve as Mentors for new Athlete Leaders. We will accomplish this by speaking with local businesses and placing flyer on community boards.
 - Planning/Promoting Fundraisers
 - Example SMART Goal: We will aim to have at least 20 athletes be a part of our region's Polar Plunge team and raise at least \$5,000 collectively (At least \$250 each). We will accomplish this by creating an open invite to all athletes on our local team's Facebook page. We will also speak to local businesses, schools, friends and family asking them to donate.
 - Recognizing Athletes/Volunteers
 - Example SMART Goal: We will recognize one outstanding athlete and volunteer at the end of each sports season that has gone above and beyond.

- **Global Messenger:** A Global Messenger is responsible for delivering speeches to various groups within their community. Each speech should be written around at least one of three purposes:
 - Recruitment of Athletes
 - Recruitment of Volunteers
 - Fundraising

- **Healthy Lifestyles:** Healthy Lifestyles is the training to become a Health and Fitness Coordinator. A Health and Fitness Coordinator is an athlete that's not only passionate about living a healthy lifestyle for themselves, but also motivates others to do the same. Each Health and Fitness Coordinator is responsible for leading walking clubs for 8+ weeks during any of SOPA's sports seasons (Winter, Spring and/or Fall).

Recognition:

- Unlike other universities, Athlete Leadership University has no graduation. Instead, SOPA will provide continual recognition to Athlete Leaders that complete the required amount of Leadership opportunities for their role(s) and provide special recognition for every five times they complete the required amount of Leadership Opportunities!

- Each role has the following requirements to be recognized:
 - Athlete Representative: Identify and complete one of the five priorities on an annual basis.
 - Global Messenger: Deliver at least six speeches.
 - Two focused on recruitment of athletes.
 - Two focused on recruitment of volunteers.
 - Two focused on fundraising.
 - Health and Fitness Coordinator: Offer walking clubs for 8+ weeks during a sports season.

Mentors:

All Athlete Leaders, regardless of age and ability, must have a Mentor to support them before, during and after Athlete Leadership University training. In order to be a Mentor, an individual must be:

- A Class A Volunteer through Special Olympics Pennsylvania with completion of:
 - Pennsylvania State Background Checks (Good for 5 Years)
 - General Orientation Training (Good for Life)
 - Protective Behaviors Training (Good for 3 Years)
 - Concussion Training (Good for 3 Years)
 - All current volunteers can update their trainings right by logging into their profile in the [online portal](#).
 - All new volunteers can register right [here](#).
- Mentor must be 18 years of age or older and, just like Athlete Leader, be able to represent Special Olympics Pennsylvania professionally in manner and appearance.
- Mentor is a chaperone and cannot be a current or former athlete.
- Mentor is highly encouraged to watch this [training video](#) to understand how they can appropriately support their Athlete Leader and gradually decrease support when Athlete Leader is able to think and act independently.

Additional Information:

For all questions related to Athlete Leadership, please contact Manager of Athlete Leadership & Young Athletes, Jordan Schubert at:

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