

# Coach Introduction Training

***Special Olympics***  
*New Jersey*



# Preview

There are two parts to the Coach Introduction Training:

- I. General Orientation
- II. Coach Orientation

These two components will educate you about Special Olympics New Jersey and provide preliminary details about the coach role to ensure the best experience for you and athletes.

## Let's begin!



## Part I: General Orientation

# Mission

To provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.



# Special Olympics: Who We Are

World's largest sports  
and health organization for people  
with intellectual disabilities

New world of inclusion and  
community, where **every single**  
**person** is accepted and welcomed,  
regardless of ability or disability



# Special Olympics: What We Do

It's more than medals!



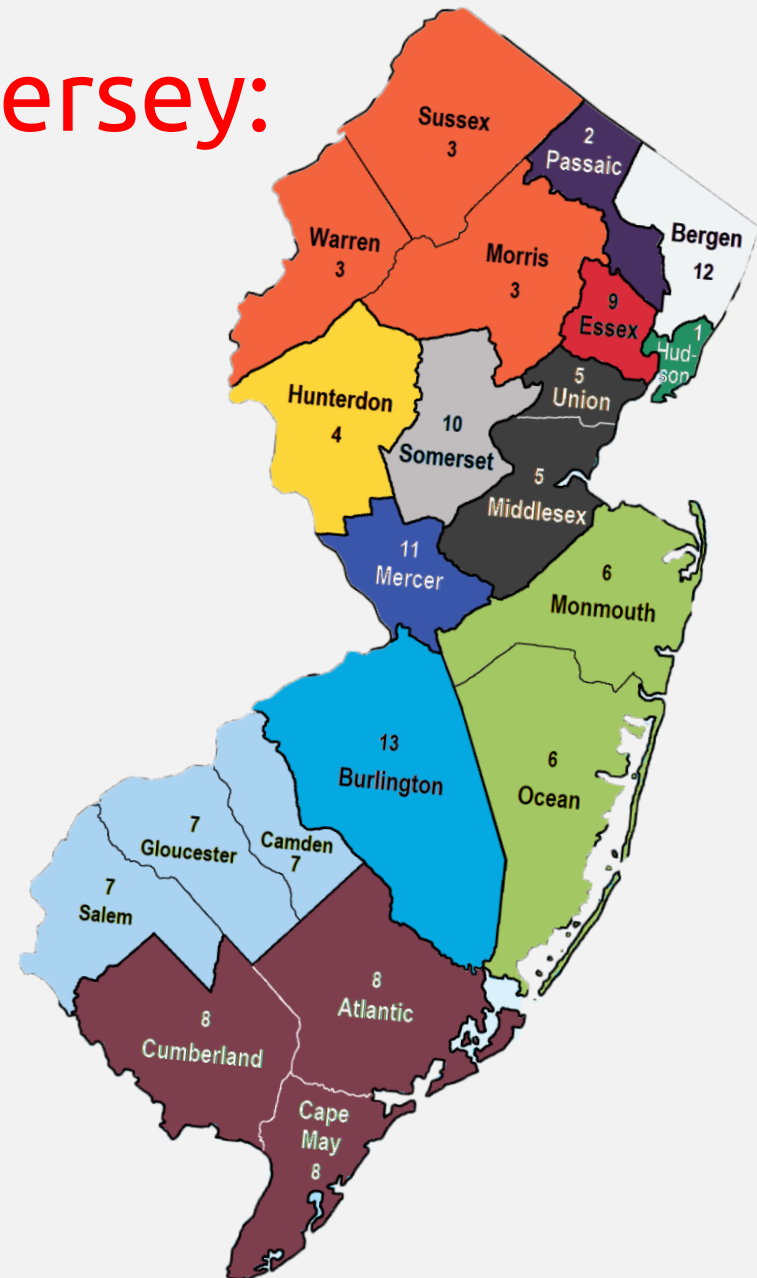
- Building communities
- Changing attitudes
- Involving youth
- Leading research
- Promoting athlete leaders
- Providing healthcare

# Special Olympics New Jersey: Where We Are

All 21 counties  
are represented by  
**13 areas**



Can you identify your area number?



# Global Impact: By the Numbers

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4.7+ Million Athletes

1+ Million Volunteers

7 Regions

169 Countries

35 Sports

108,000+ Competitions

150,000+ Medical Screenings

\$500+ Million Raised

# New Jersey Impact: A Year by the Numbers

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25 Sports

25,000 Athletes

22,000+ Volunteers

350 Local Training Programs

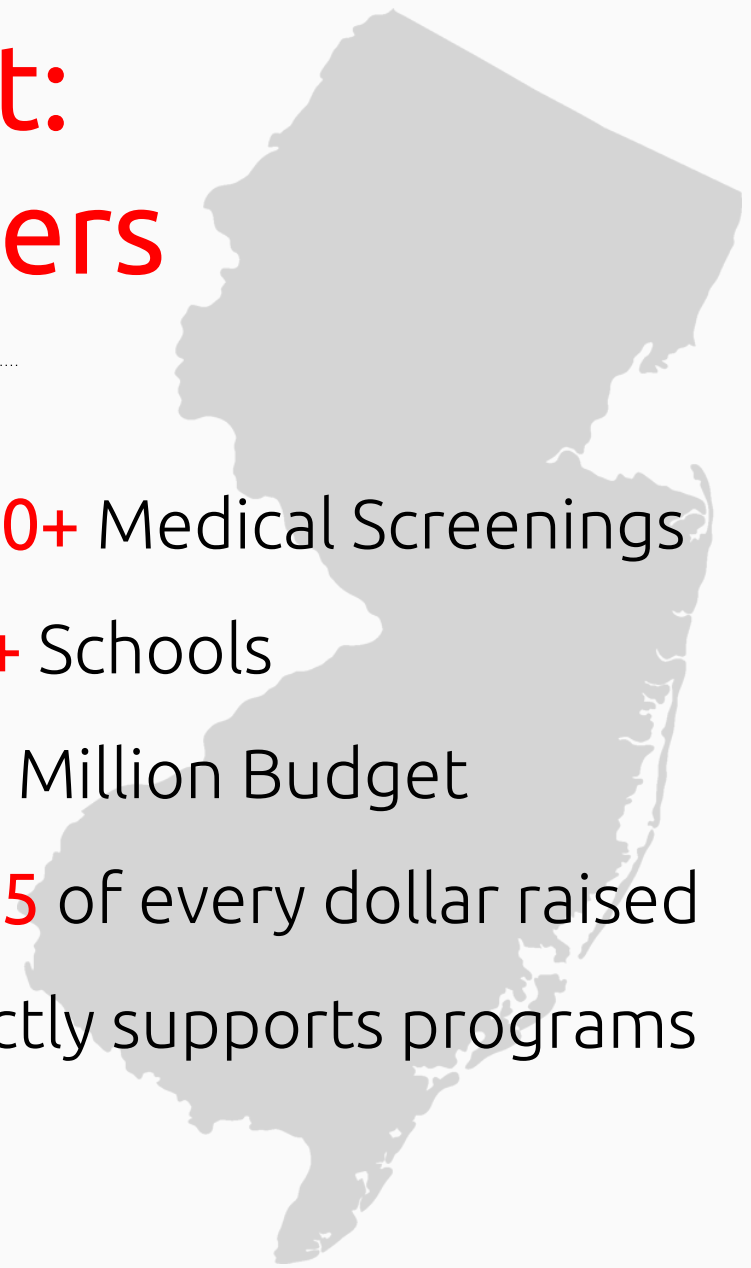
250+ Competitions

2,000+ Medical Screenings

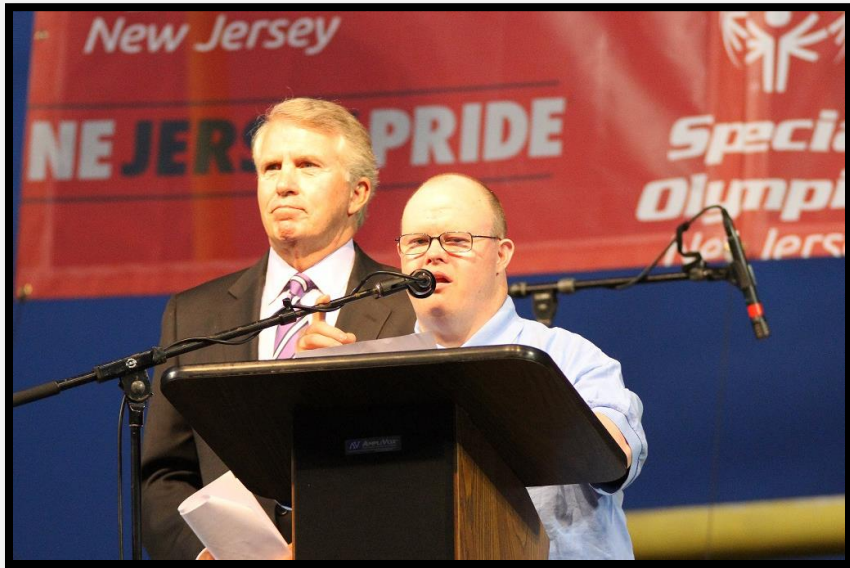
140+ Schools

\$8.3 Million Budget

\$0.85 of every dollar raised  
directly supports programs



# Athlete Oath



“Let me win.  
But if I cannot win,  
let me be brave  
in the attempt.”

# New Jersey Program Initiatives

- Athlete Leadership
- Camp Shriver
- Coach Education
- College Unified
- Healthy Communities
- Interscholastic Sports
- Traditional Sports
- Unified Champion Schools



- Unified Sports
- Young Athletes

# Sports Offered

## FALL

Cycling

Equestrian

Flag Football

Golf

Soccer

Triathlon

## WINTER

Alpine Skiing

XC Skiing

Figure Skating

Floor Hockey

Indoor Rowing

Speed Skating

Snowboarding

Snowshoeing

Volleyball

## SPRING

Basketball

Bowling

## SUMMER

Baseball

Bocce

Gymnastics

Powerlifting

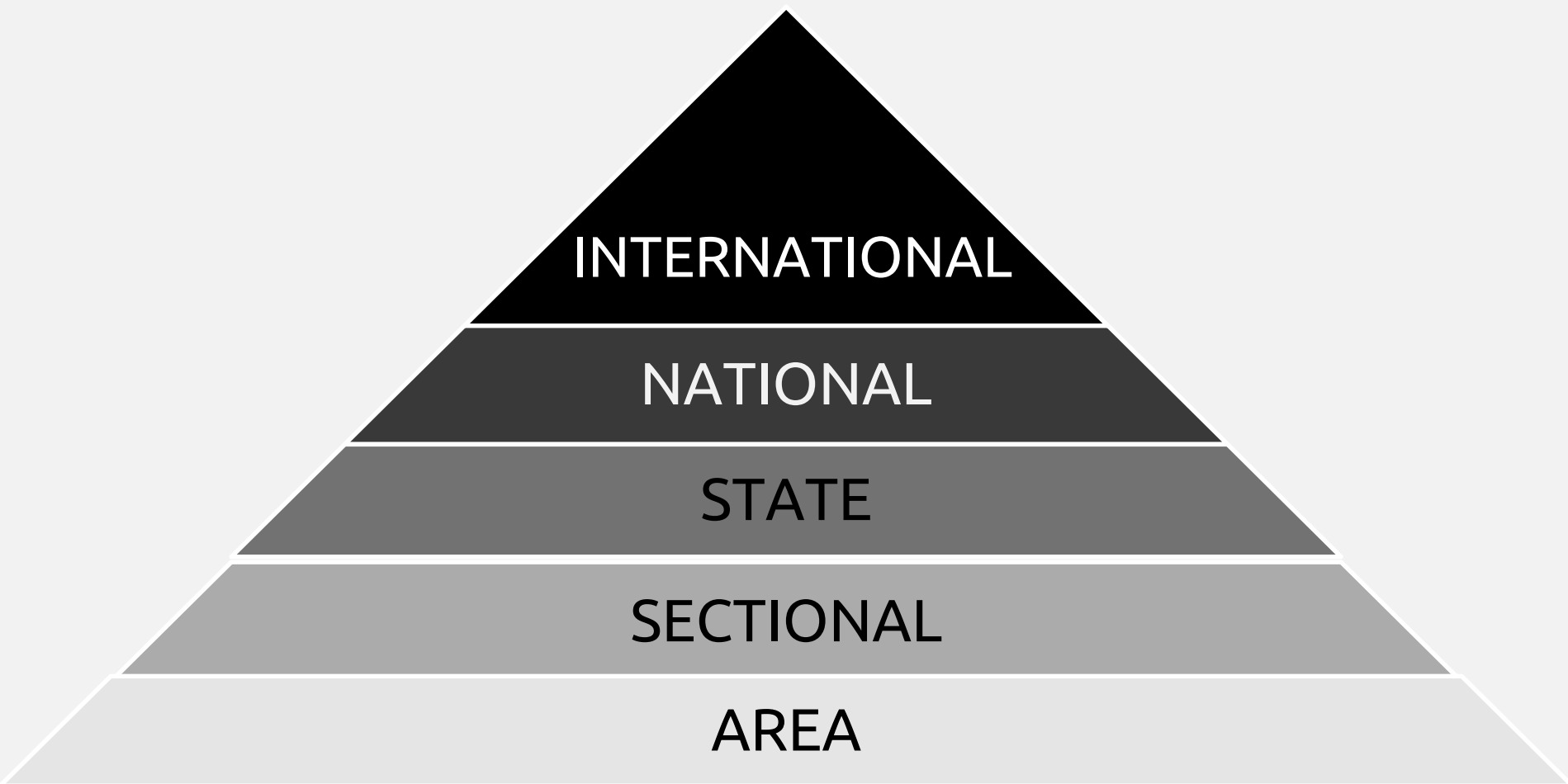
Softball

Swimming

Tennis

Track & Field

# Competition Levels



# Competition Elements

## What is unique about competitions?

- **Travel.** With competition at the local, regional and state level, athletes and teams often travel throughout the state for competitions.
- **Divisioning.** Through a process called 'divisioning,' athletes are grouped together by gender, age and ability levels. This allows for fair and equalized competition for all athletes. It is by this process that athletes are scored.
- **Awards.** All athletes receive medals at competition that are based on their results.

# Athlete Eligibility

- **Intellectual Disability.**
  - To participate as an athlete, a person's primary disability must be intellectual. Athletes can have physical disabilities in addition.
  - Determined by a professional or standardized measure such as an IQ test.
- **Age Requirements.**
  - Ages 2-7: Eligible to participate in Young Athletes
  - Age 6: Eligible to train with a local sports program
  - Ages 8 and above: Eligible to compete at sanctioned competition
  - There is no maximum age to participate!

# What is Intellectual Disability?

An intellectual disability is a broad term defined by differences in learning processes, communication and/or social skills.

# Types of Intellectual Disabilities

- There are many types of intellectual disabilities. Although there are disability-associated needs that a volunteer in a coaching, chaperone or medical role may need to know, try to focus on the individual and not the disability.
- Part II of this training will detail practical strategies for helping coaches understand and respond to certain challenges, needs and behaviors.

# Talk the Talk

## LANGUAGE IS POWER.

- **Terms.** Special Olympics athletes have intellectual disabilities, not special needs or mental retardation. They are not challenged, handicapped or less fortunate.
- **Identification.** Refer to athletes as “Special Olympics athletes” or “athletes.”
- **Age-Appropriateness.** Keep in mind when describing athletes that the majority of them are not young children. Words like “cute” and “adorable” are not usually fitting for an adult. In general, avoid referring to athletes as “kids,” no matter their age.

# Talk the Talk

## LANGUAGE IS POWER.

- **Tone.** Speak in the same tone as you would with anyone else. Using “baby talk” or speaking louder than necessary is not appropriate.
- **Person-First.** People with intellectual disabilities are people FIRST. Avoid saying phrases such as, “intellectually disabled people” or “wheelchair bound.” Those phrases should be, “people with intellectual disabilities,” or “uses a wheelchair.”



# Engaging With Athletes

- **Eye Contact.** Speak directly to athletes. Even if an athlete uses a translator or has an aide to help with verbal communication, address the athlete and look at him or her. Please also note that an athlete might not make eye contact when you're talking but that may not mean he or she isn't listening.
- **Team Interaction.** Interact with athletes the same as you would with any other friend in a sports setting when it comes to high fives, fist bumps, hugs and photos together. Determine your comfort level and don't feel obligated to change that.
- **Initiate.** Sometimes it can take time to feel comfortable in a new setting. To help you acclimate faster in your role, it helps to be willing to talk to new people and ask questions. The more you can engage in the environment without inhibitions, the more likely your experience will be positive.

# Perspective

- **Rule of Thumb.** People with intellectual disabilities are people FIRST and not defined by their disability. Each athlete has his/her own personality, interests, sports skills and behaviors.



# Possible Volunteer Roles

THERE IS A FIT FOR EVERYONE!

- Board Member
- Coach
- Committee
- Event Volunteer
- Fundraiser
- Health Care Professionals
- Law Enforcement Torch Run
- Medical Support
- Office Support
- Official
- Trainer/Clinician
- Unified Partner

# Almost There!

You have completed the  
**Part I: General Orientation** and will  
now begin **Part II: Coach Orientation**.

***Special Olympics***  
*New Jersey*





## Part II: Coach Orientation

# Coach Description

- **Age.** Must be at least 18 years old.
- **Qualification.** A coach is anyone who likes being in a sports environment and can commit time for a high-engagement volunteer role. Training is provided to help learn more about the sport(s) and athletes they are coaching.
- **Role.** Coaches help athletes improve in their sports training and prepare for competition.



# Coach's Oath

"In the name of all coaches, we shall follow written and verbal instructions of Special Olympics officials at all times, have our athletes at the appropriate events and activities at the proper time and abide by the rules and policies, in the spirit of sportsmanship."

# Coaches Code of Conduct

The full Code of Conduct is found in Article 1 of the Official Special Olympics International Rules on the website. The Code includes the following items:

- Respect for Others
- Ensure a Positive Experience
- Act Professionally and Take Responsibility for My Actions
- Quality Service to the Athletes
- Health and Safety of Athletes

*“By registration as a coach, I understand that if I violate this Code of Conduct, I will be subject to a range of consequences, up to and including being prohibited from coaching and volunteering in Special Olympics.”*

# Sports Program Models

There are a variety of ways athletes and coaches can be involved in Special Olympics New Jersey. Not all sports programs look the same. Make sure you know in what program model you participate.

Program Models:

- **Local Training Program.** 350+ programs in the state
- **Unified Champion School.** 140+ schools in the state
- **College Unified.** 12 colleges in the state

The Local Training Program model is detailed in the following two slides. Visit [www.sonj.org](http://www.sonj.org) for specific information about the other models.

# Local Training Program (LTP)

An LTP is a program of one or more athletes and coaches who train and compete in one or more sports throughout the year.

Types:

- **Community.** Examples: Fitness Centers, Group Homes, YMCAs, Young Athletes Program
- **Independent.** Example: Parent and Child

Athletes can participate in multiple LTPs but are only allowed to compete in one sport per season. Coaches can coach in multiple LTPs but are only allowed to coach in one LTP for each sport.

# Local Training Program (LTP): Who Does What?

- **LTP Coordinator.** This person manages the program, including Participation Packets, scheduling practices, securing practice facility, paperwork and registration. This person is the liaison to the SONJ state office.
- **Coach.** This person plans the training season and practice sessions, including recording preliminary competition scores. This person is the first person responsible for athletes during training and competition.
- **Athlete.** This person attends practices, works hard towards set goals and, when ready, attends competition.

**Every LTP has an LTP Coordinator.**

**A coach can also serve as an LTP Coordinator.**

# Coach Expectations

## Basic Responsibilities

- Assess and train athletes
- Manage communication between athletes, families/caretakers, program volunteers and Special Olympics New Jersey
- Know, understand and abide by the rules
- Execute the emergency and safety prevention duties of a coach
- Participation in coach education

These responsibilities are better executed with a coaching team.

Maintain a 4:1 ratio of athletes-to-coaches to best manage the program.

# Coach Expectations

## Coach Education

- Clinics and courses offered in a tier-level Coach Education System and sanctioned by the National Committee for Accreditation of Coaching Education
- Through participation in the [Coach Education System](#), coaches earn certifications. These certifications are encouraged, but not required, by Special Olympics New Jersey.



# Coach Expectations

## Training and Competition

- **S.M.A.R.T.** Set Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely goals for the team and with your athletes.
- **Practice Plan.** For the most successful practice, record the activities, equipment and coaches needed for each activity before every practice.
- **Medical Record.** Keep a copy of every athlete's Participation Packet on site at all practices and competitions.
- **Coach and Team Meetings.** Conduct meetings in advance of the first practice each season to provide information, set expectations and answer questions.
- **Maximum Effort Rule.** Athletes must put forth their "honest" and maximum effort in preliminary events or they risk being disqualified from remaining events.

# Coach Expectations

For additional details and information about these expectations, download Article 1 of the [Special Olympics International Sports Rules Guide](#).



# Coach Expectations

Remember, competition is only the end result.  
Practices are the real work of coaching!



# Athlete Population

## Disability Types

- Athletes may have many different conditions, disorders and labels of 'intellectual disability.'
- Coaches are not necessarily explicitly notified of a disability and it is not required for them to know. They may check the athlete Medical for information regarding diagnosis. If it is not stated or unclear, it is possible there is no label.
- Coaches are encouraged to identify behavioral and physiological challenges and then determine strategies to help athletes develop their abilities. Use the following chart as a resource.

# Athlete Population

## Putting it to Practice: Identify Behaviors to Support Coaching

ATHLETE BEHAVIOR	STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE LEARNING
Short attention span	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Provide repetition and review</li><li>- Work 1:1</li></ul>
Difficulty forming social bonds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Work in small groups or 1:1</li><li>- Create highly structured, minimally-distracting environment</li></ul>
Frequent outbursts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Specify location for individual to regain self control</li><li>- Enforce rules with conditions for returning to participation</li></ul>

View full chart in the [Athlete-Centered Coaching Guide](#)

# Athlete Population

## Possible Triggers to Challenging Behaviors

- Consider what may cause a trigger to emerge. Ask yourself these questions to help you create an environment that provides the structure, familiarity, support and reinforcement of athlete needs.
  - Is the environment too noisy?
  - Is the instruction multi-stepped?
  - Is there too much waiting?
- Addressing these needs can be difference-makers for athletes to develop new skills or not.

# Athlete Population

## Physiological Considerations

- **Hypotonia.** *Low muscle tone*
  - Slower physical development
  - Difficulty controlling muscles in one's mouth which affects speech
  - Muscular Dystrophy, Cerebral Palsy, Down syndrome
- **Flat Feet.**
  - Causes instability of kneecap, hips and spine
  - Decreased range of motion
  - Down syndrome
  - Physical activity helps strengthen the foot and is encouraged!

# Athlete Population

## Physiological Considerations

- Balance.
  - Can be due to vision impairments
  - Agility exercises can be difficult
  - Include activities that encourage honing one's center of gravity
- Atlanto-Axial Instability.
  - Malalignment of the neck
  - Affects 10% of people with Down syndrome
  - Be aware of activities that place undue stress on the head and neck!

# Athlete Population

## Other Challenges

- **Auditory Processing Disorder.**
  - Delayed or interrupted filtering of verbal information to understand meaning
  - Be patient to allow for athletes to process and follow instruction the first time it is given
- **Sensory Processing Disorder.**
  - Misappropriation of messages delivered from the senses that can yield an inappropriate response
  - Can lead to sensory overload, so be aware of volume, brightness, heat, touch, etc...

# Athlete Population

## Other Challenges

- **Memory.**
  - Single-step instructions
  - Repeat instructions
- **Medications.**
  - Change in medication dosage, regime or another variable can trigger certain behaviors
  - Ask parents and guardians to communicate information about medication changes that may cause a change in behavior in advance of practices or competitions – *preparation is key*

# Athlete Population

## Behaviors

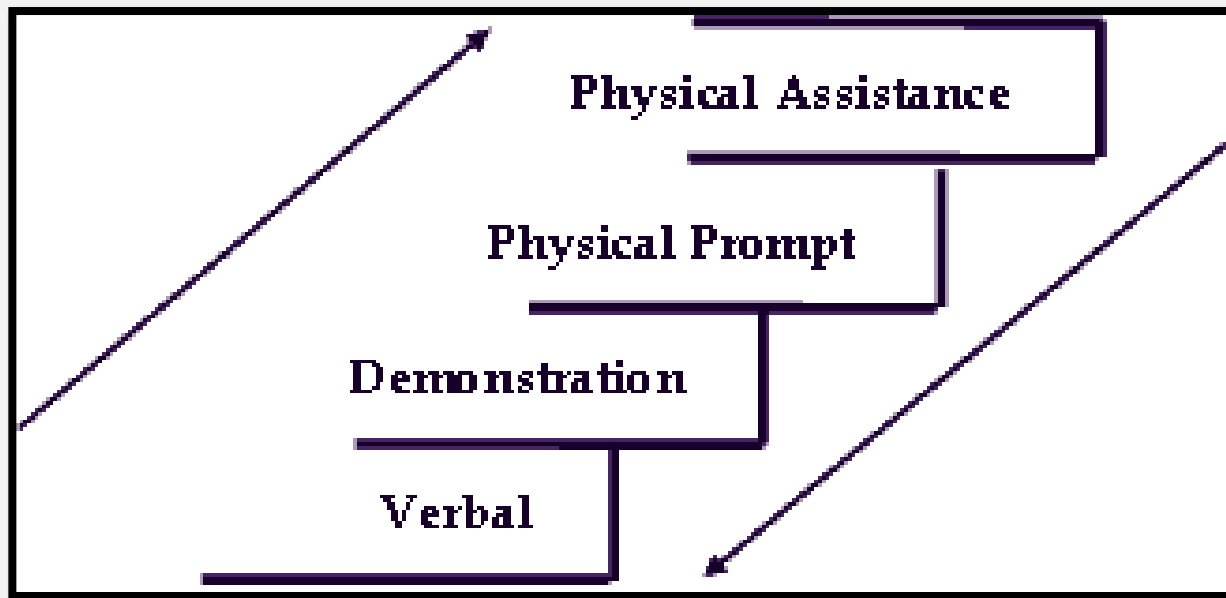
- Self-Stimulatory Behavior.
  - A physical or verbal expression, sometimes repetitive
  - Non-violent
- Self-Injurious Behavior.
  - Any level of harm a person brings to his or her own body
  - Physical, like hitting or harshly slapping oneself

Encourage self-stimulatory behavior to not replace participation. Employ strategies if an athlete exhibits self-injurious behavior. These are **two different behaviors** and one **does not** lead to the other.

# Coaching Strategies

## Levels of Instruction

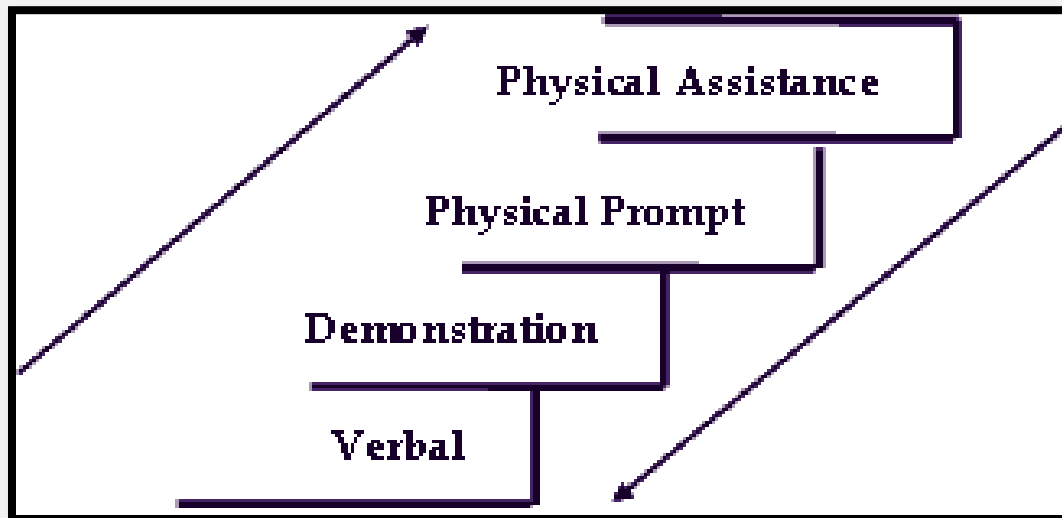
- Regardless of the type of skill, the basic levels of instruction are verbal, demonstration, physical prompting and physical assistance.



# Coaching Strategies

## Why the Progression?

- Give athletes every opportunity to be as independently successful as possible first. This could mean a combination of verbal and demonstrative to begin. An athlete might be more capable to follow these instructions independently than it is initially perceived.



IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO KNOW THE MISSION.



BE THE MISSION.



# IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO KNOW THE MISSION.

As a coach, you wear many hats and have many responsibilities. Use the resources at Special Olympics New Jersey, your fellow coaching community and in your local area to support you as you get started.

# BE THE MISSION.

# Congratulations!

Your Coach Introduction Training is now complete.

The next slide will provide information to process your completion of this training and get started coaching!



Click [HERE](#) to submit your confirmation.

Thank you for your commitment to training  
and celebrating people with intellectual  
disabilities in your community!

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