

Volunteering for Young Athletes

**Special
Olympics**
New Jersey



What is Young Athletes?

Young Athletes is an inclusive sports play program for children ages 2 through 7 that prepares them for future participation in sports while improving gross motor, social and cognitive skills. It's play with a purpose!



Young Athletes welcomes children and their families into the world of Special Olympics and provides a community of inclusion while developing social, emotional and motor skills.

- **Motor skills** – Children with intellectual disabilities who took part in Young Athletes developed motor skills more than twice as fast as others who did not take part
- **Social, emotional and learning skills** – Parents and teachers of children who took part in the Young Athletes curriculum said the children learned skills that they will use in pre-primary school
- **Expectations** – Family members say that Young Athletes raised their hopes for their child's future
- **Sport readiness** – Young Athletes helps children get ready to take part in sports when they are older
- **Acceptance** – Inclusive play helps children without a disability to better understand and accept others

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Tips on Being a Young Athletes Volunteer

- Put away your cell phone
- Interact with athletes at activity stations and during group games
- Say hello to the parents/guardians
- Use gestures to communicate with athletes who may not speak
- Be creative!
- Ask parents/guardians for help when needed
- Get down to the athlete's level by sitting, kneeling or bending
- Follow the lead of the athlete. Don't force him/her to do an activity
- Have FUN!
- Support the coach in group games
- Help athletes do activities with proper form
- Ask the coach for help if you need it
- Bring a lot of energy!
- Provide encouragement to the athletes and their families

Additional Information

- Volunteer orientation will be provided onsite
- Please wear sneakers and comfortable clothing
- Contact the coach of the program you registered for regarding any additional volunteer questions