

## Memo

Date: 8/13/07

Subject: Family/caregivers at practices, competitions and events:  
spectators vs. volunteers

From: Special Olympics Florida

To: County Coordinators, FPAC representatives and Area Program Directors



This communication is to remind all Special Olympics Florida programs that special care needs to be given to the role of parents, family members or care givers at Special Olympics sanctioned events.

While we strongly encourage family involvement in Special Olympics, for the safety of all involved, the boundary between spectator and official volunteered must be respected and maintained.

Simply put: you either are a registered class A or B volunteer or you're not. Everyone else, parents, family members, care givers or any other spectators, etc. are not to perform any volunteer duties or have contact, no matter how minimal, infrequent or brief. This issue has been particularly prevalent at practices and competitions.

Reasons why this is important:

- Only registered volunteers are properly trained in expected/assigned duties.
- Registered volunteers have read and agreed to the terms and conditions of volunteerism with Special Olympics Florida, particularly with respect to safety and health issues.
- It can be confusing to the athletes, as well as to other volunteers and parents, as to who is an actual volunteer and therefore, official representative of Special Olympics Florida.

This is important because legal precedent has been set where someone who was not an active or registered volunteer with a Special Olympics program, but rather a parent who brought their child to practices, was perceived by the athletes as a person of authority on behalf of the organization. Special Olympics was held legally liable for the inappropriate actions of that individual because while not an actual "agent" of Special Olympics, they were perceived and therefore treated that as such by the athletes, because this parent would occasionally help with small tasks, such as tying shoe laces to help athletes get ready for practice, assisting them with their equipment, etc.

- Anyone not registered as a volunteer is not covered by Special Olympics' Corporate Insurance Policy, in the event of injury.
- Parental or family interference can disrupt the coaching and supervision process.

Therefore, if you have family members or caregivers who wish to assist at sanctioned practices and events, they must undergo the exact same Class A or B (depending on which is appropriate for their level of interaction) Volunteer registration and training process as any other volunteer.

Otherwise, all parents, family members, care givers or any other responsible party must be present only as spectators and respect the viewing areas established by the local program for both their own safety and that of the athletes and volunteers.

As reminder, here is what defines a Class A and Class B Volunteer, per the Special Olympics Volunteer Screening Policy:

### A. Class Volunteers

1. Volunteers who have regular, close physical contact with athletes
2. Volunteers in a position of authority or supervision with athletes
3. Volunteers in a position of trust of athletes
4. Volunteers who handle substantial amounts of cash or other assets of the Program

### B. Class B Volunteers

1. Volunteers who only have limited contact with athletes or who have contact with athletes accompanied by coaches and chaperones