

Level 2 Flag Football



- This training is to certify coaches as Level 2 coaches for Flag Football.
- Certification (or recertification) is good for **3 years** from date completed.

Level 2 Flag Football



This training will cover the following sections:

- Rules
- Penalties
- Registration and the divisioning process
- Flag Football resources.

Included is the Coaching Athletes training that will prepare you to use your sport-specific knowledge in coaching athletes with intellectual disabilities.

Coaching Special Olympics Athletes



- For veteran Special Olympics coaches, this course serves as a reminder of the essentials of coaching.
- For new Special Olympics coaches, this course will help prepare you for your first role in coaching Special Olympics athletes.

Coaching Special Olympics Athletes



The better the **coach** ...

the better the **experiences** ...

the better the **athlete!**



Above: A Special Olympics coach talking with a tennis athlete

Left: Special Olympics coach giving high fives on the sideline

Course Overview



This course will cover specific topics related to:

1 - The Athlete



4 - Managing the Program

2 - Teaching & Training

3 - Preparing for & Coaching During Competition

Unit 1 - The Athlete

Important Considerations concerning Special Olympics Athletes



Psychological Considerations (*Learning*)



Medical
Considerations

Social
Considerations

Unit 1 - Psychological Considerations



Motivation – helping athletes maintain interest

- May have shorter attention span; harder to keep “on task”.
- May be motivated more by short-term rather than long-term goals.
- May learn better with more frequent positive reinforcement.

Perception – helping athletes understand the sport in which they are participating

- May have impairments in sight or hearing.
- May have difficulty focusing attention on the appropriate object or task.

Unit 1 - Psychological Considerations



Comprehension – helping athletes remember and perform the skill they have learned

- May find it difficult to understand verbal explanations of skills.
- May find it easier to learn through visual demonstrations.
- May have difficulty in understanding complex explanations.
- May take a longer time between learning multiple pieces of information.
- May have difficulty generalizing skills learned in one situation to a different situation.
- Written instructions may be more helpful than verbal, depending on the situation.

Unit 1 - Psychological Challenges



Psychological Item	Challenge	Action
Perception	Easily distracted by noise	Control surroundings
Motivation	Easily discouraged, or having a feeling of failure	Focus on positive communication
Comprehension	Difficulty learning from verbal explanation or long instructions	Add demonstrations of skills, keeping instructions clear and concise

Unit 1 - Psychological Challenges



Motivation

- Challenge – Easily discouraged, or having feeling of failure
- Action – Point out positive things when the athlete is doing well

Comprehension

- Challenge – Learning from verbal explanation or long instructions
- Action – Add demonstrations, hands-on walkthroughs of skills, keeping instructions clear and concise

Perception

- Challenge – Easily distracted by noise
- Action – Control surroundings

Right: Athlete running by a crowd at track and field.



Unit 1 - Medical Considerations



Down Syndrome

- Approximately 10% of individuals with Down Syndrome have a condition called Atlanto-axial instability.
- This condition may cause possible injury if they participate in activities that hyper-extend or radically flex the neck or upper spine.
- Prohibited sports – equestrian, gymnastics, diving, pentathlon, butterfly and dive starts in swimming, high jump, alpine/snowboarding, squat (powerlifting) and soccer.



Right: Two athletes celebrate at swimming.

Unit 1 - Medical Considerations



Medications

- Understand that athletes may be taking medications that have physical side effects.
- Consult with head coach or head of delegation if concerns arise.

Seizures

- The number of Special Olympics athletes with seizure disorders is higher than traditional athletes.
- Tasks to remember when assisting an athlete having a seizure:
 - Assist to a safe space around them;
 - Protect their head and neck; and
 - Lay on their side.

Unit 1 - Medical Considerations



Physical Disabilities

- Some athletes also have physical disabilities which may affect the sports they can participate in.
- Special Olympics has events for individuals who use wheelchairs, walkers or other assistance.
- Muscle strength may be needed for a sport and some athletes may not have the strength for that sport.
 - This might be due to lack of use or a permanent disability.
 - This will change how you as a coach approaches helping this athlete.

Unit 1 - Medical Considerations



Autism

- Approximately 20% of athletes have an autism diagnosis
- Approximately 50% of people with autism are non-verbal

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

- These athletes may consistently function better on performance tasks compared with verbal tasks. The more concrete the task, the better the performance.
- These athletes may tend to have attention and memory deficits and often display poor judgment in identifying right from wrong.

Unit 1 – Medical Considerations Table



Diagnosis	Consideration
Down Syndrome	Family should ensure the athlete is screened for Atlanto-axial instability (see medical if necessary)
Seizure Disorder	Be prepared to protect and observe the athlete should a seizure occur and minimize adverse affects
Autism spectrum disorder	Understand that athletes will engage in self-stimulatory behavior (hand-flapping, jumping, etc.), and that it is not necessarily a problem
Attention deficit/hyperactivity (ADHD)	Shorten drills and provide one-to-one assistance when needed
Fetal alcohol syndrome	Demonstrate clear performance tasks

Unit 1 - Social Considerations



Economic Status

- May lack financial means to participate.
- May not have access to independent transportation.

Social Skills

- May lack basic interactive skills.
- May lack language interpretation.

Recreation at Home

- May lack physical activity.
- May lack encouragement/motivation.

Right: Basketball team huddles up for a breakdown



Unit 1 - Social Considerations



All the following social considerations may impact an athlete's participation in Special Olympics:

- Inappropriate responses to social situations
- Extreme lack of endurance
- Lack of access to transportation

Our challenge as coaches is to develop a full understanding of our athletes and what they bring with them to a Special Olympics program.



Left: Caddie congratulates an athlete at a golf competition.

Unit 2 – Teaching & Training the Athlete



Top Left: Basketball coach talking to team on sidelines

Bottom Left: Coach discussing strategy with an athlete



Top Right: Athlete getting prepared for powerlifting competition

Bottom Right: Coach getting athlete ready before track race



Unit 2 - Organizing a Training Session



There are many ways to organize a training session for Special Olympics athletes.

There is considerable value in developing a consistent training routine that provides familiarity.

1. Warm-Up and Stretching

- Specific to the sport
- Similar in every practice session
- Involve athletes in leading activity

Unit 2 - Organizing a Training Session



2. Skills Instruction

- Break skills into smaller tasks
- Involve as many athletes at a time as possible
- Practice skills directly related to competition

3. Competition Experience

- Simulating game situations
- Work towards what the competition will look like

4. Cool-Down, Stretch, and Reward

- Play a game related to the sport
- End each training with a cool-down activity and stretching

Unit 2 - Training Sequence



1. Break down skills into small tasks or steps.
2. Put together tasks to form skills.
3. Use drills and activities that always involve many athletes.
4. Practice skills in situations that are related to the game or event.



Above: Athlete and trainer working on alpine skiing.

Unit 2 - Training Sequence



Step	Challenge	Consideration
Tasks	Performing important parts of competition	Break down into individual parts
Skills	Performing series of tasks effectively that are necessary to perform a sport	Focus on the most important tasks for the sport
Application	Repeatedly demonstrate sport tasks in different situations	Provide game-like drills in practice
Competition	Putting essential sport skills into practice	Provide scrimmage opportunities in practice

Unit 2 - Communication



Communication is key to immediately reinforcing desired behavior.

There are several key words that begin with a “C” which address what a coach should say:

- Clear
- Concrete
- Concise
- Consistent
- Command-oriented



Left: Coach and athlete share a high-five at first base
Below: Coach and athlete having a conversation while at alpine skiing



Unit 2 – Communication



Criteria	Description	Sport Example
Clear	Use word that are easy to understand	“Swing the bat” Softball
Concrete	Connect words to something defined	“Jump forward” Long Jump
Concise	Use a few key words that cue a desired action	“Go to the free throw line” Basketball
Consistent	Use the same word or phrase for the same action	“Breathe” Swimming
Command-Oriented	Use words that reinforce a desired action	“On your mark. Set. Go.” Track and Field

Unit 2 - Levels of Assistance



Each athlete needs to be met where he or she is.

It is important to use the appropriate level of instruction and assistance.

- Athletes with lower abilities may need more assistance
- Verbal assistance should always be paired with a demonstration
- Physical assistance may be needed to help an athlete get positioned



Above: Coach demonstrating the grip of a golf club to an athlete

Unit 2 - Levels of Assistance



Level of Assistance	Description	Sport Example
Verbal	Tell the athlete what to do	Footwork: “run forward to the line; then stop”
Demonstration	Show the athlete the what to do	Basketball: have athlete watch while someone else shoots a free throw
Partial Physical Assistance	Place the athlete in the proper position	Golf: coach adjusts the athlete's hands on the golf club with the correct grip
Full Physical Assistance	Help the athlete through the entire motion of the skill	Bowling: coach moves the athlete’s arm through the entire bowling movement

Unit 2 - Managing Athlete Behavior



A coach may often have certain expectations of an athlete that may not be realistic ... not because the coach does not care, but because the coach does not understand or appreciate the differences that may exist.

When an athlete shows inappropriate behavior, it may not be defiance, acting out or silliness.

These behaviors may simply reflect the person and/or what is operating in the moment.

Unit 2 - Managing Athlete Behavior



Athlete Behavior	Strategies to Improve Learning
Swimmer has a short attention span	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Focus on a stroke for short periods of time2. Provide multiple activities focusing on same task
Basketball athlete yells if they miss a shot	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Emphasize the other parts of the game2. Work on shooting drills without a hoop, then evolve to shooting at a hoop
Bowler doesn't wait their turn	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Have a coach at the lane help with the order of bowlers, explain whose turn it is2. Emphasize that the bowler will always follow the same person

Unit 3 - Preparing & Coaching for Competition



A key goal of Special Olympics is to provide an opportunity for all athletes to experience success in competitions.

A Special Olympics athlete can benefit from many aspects of a competition, but nothing should be as important to the coach as the focus on the participation in the competition itself.

This section highlights ways to improve the quality of an athlete's competition experience.

Unit 3 - Preparing for Competition



Registration

- Provide accurate team roster information, qualifying times, and skills assessment scores.

Official competition rules

- Make sure that you know the Official Special Olympics Rules.
- Teach your athletes the rules and, during training, phase out your verbal reminders about rules.
- At competition, coaches may have little or no opportunity to assist athletes when they are not following the rules. (A coach cannot be on the track with them!)



Right: A poly hockey official calls 'no goal'

Unit 3 - Preparing for Competition



Supervision

- Why are non-coaching support members important? There is a lot going on outside of the actual competition, including:
 - Transportation
 - Lodging (need for same-sex supervision)
 - Social activities
 - Multiple events to supervise
 - Awards ceremonies
- Create a supervision document that has athletes covered in every part of the competition

Unit 3 - Preparing for Competition



Travel and overnight

- Discuss overnight concerns with parents or group-home supervisors.
- Distribute a simple checklist of items to bring for athletes
- Make sure that all special medication needs are understood.
 - Coaches may have to assist with handling medications, so be sure to always have all medical forms and information readily available.
- Arrange an effective rooming situation that limits possible clashes between athletes

Unit 3 - Competition-Day Coaching



Guidelines for success

- Teach responsibility & independence
- Help athletes understand what to wear and what to expect on competition day
- Teach athletes how to maintain appropriate behavior at a competition
- Arrive early to allow time for putting on uniforms, a warm-up and stretching routine and focusing on the competition.
- Encourage maximum effort in practice and competition

Unit 3 - Competition-Day Coaching



Guidelines for success

- Let athletes compete without direct supervision
 - Allow athletes to make mistakes and help them learn from them
- Make any official protests calmly
 - If you think there is a valid reason to protest the outcome, do so in a calm manner, and **not involving athletes in disputes.**
 - Help athletes deal appropriately with winning and losing.
 - Focus on effort made, recognize accomplishments and new skills that were performed and taking something positive away from **every** experience.

Unit 4 – Managing the Program



The successful Special Olympics coach is:

- Knowledgeable about the sport and coaching
 - Knowledge of the sport and how to teach it is essential if coaches are to help athletes and truly benefit from their Special Olympics experience.
 - Successful coaches are constantly looking for opportunities to learn more about the sport.
- Knowledgeable about Special Olympics
 - Special Olympics has a clear mission, philosophy, and rules that have been developed through years of worldwide experience.
 - A better understanding of the mission will benefit your athletes.

Unit 4 – Managing the Program



The successful Special Olympics coach:

- Recruits and trains assistant coaches
 - Assistant coaches can be recruited to provide one-to-one attention
 - Assistant coaches are the most useful when they are trained and are a part of the planning process at practice
- Recruits and trains athletes
 - A coach is also a promoter and recruiter, hopefully trying to expand their team to more possible athletes
- Assists with appropriate sport selection
 - Picking a sport that is both age and ability appropriate for their team

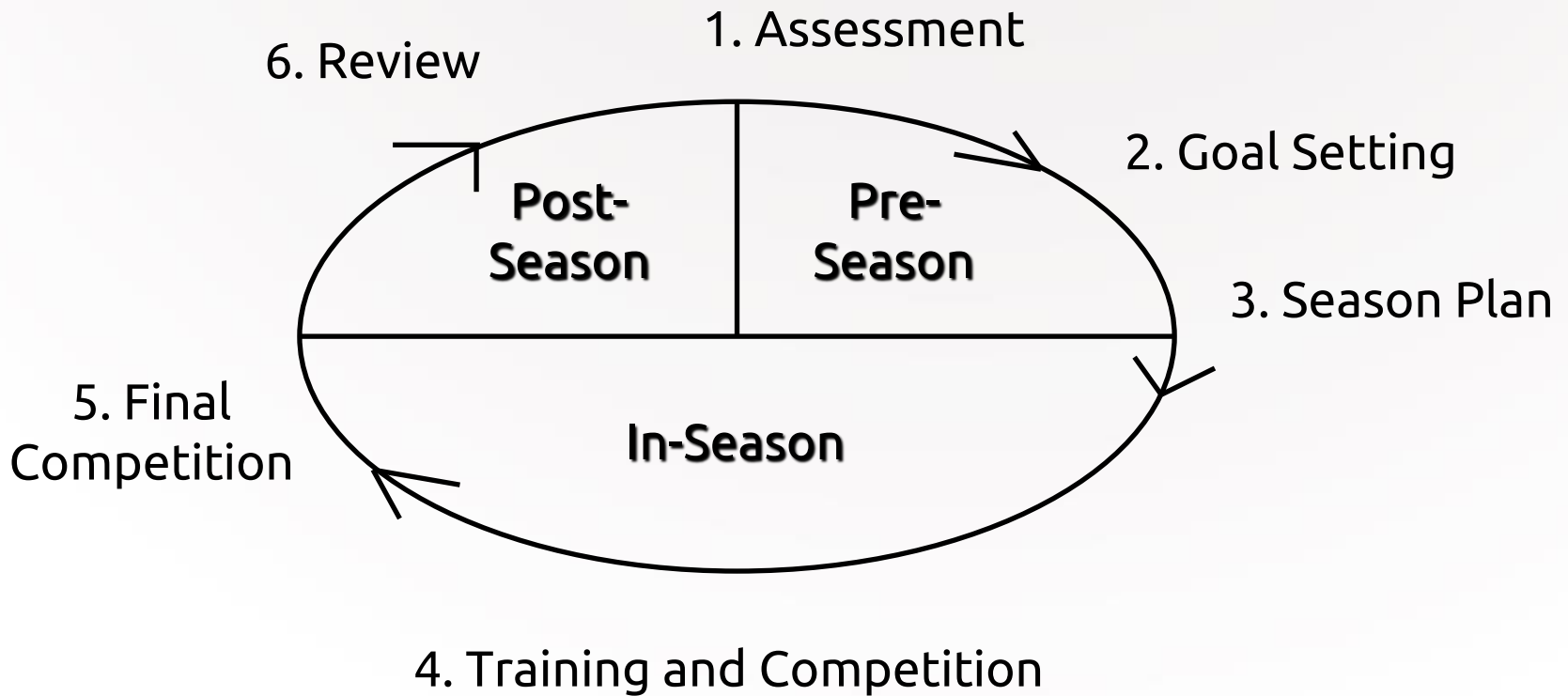
Unit 4 – Managing the Program



The successful Special Olympics coach:

- Offers activities for all ability levels
- Puts a priority on safety
- Involves families and providers
 - This includes educating families and providers about the benefits of Special Olympics, as well as appropriate nutrition and training at home
- Assists with community inclusion
 - Improves social skills and creates opportunities to spread information about Special Olympics

Unit 4 – Preparation



Level 2 Flag Football



Right: Team posing for a picture.

Coach Ratio – Individual Skills



Athletes	Level II	Level I		Athletes	Level II	Level I
1-4	1	0		33-36	3	6
5-8	1	1		37-40	3	7
9-12	1	2		41-44	3	8
13-16	1	3		45-48	3	9
17-20	2	3		49-52	4	9
21-24	2	4		53-56	4	10
25-28	2	5		57-60	4	11
29-32	2	6		61-64	4	12

- All Coaches and Unified Partners must complete the Level 1 training prior to participating with a team.
- Level 1 certification requires a Volunteer Application and Level 1 online training and both items are found [here](#).

Coach Ratio – Teams



- For each team, here are the coaching requirements:

Athletes	Level II	Level I
3-4	1	0
5-8	1	1
9-12	1	2
13-16	1	3

- All Coaches and Unified partners must complete the Level 1 training prior to participating with a team.
- Level 1 certification requires a Volunteer Application and Level 1 online training and both items are found [here](#).

Rules



Gameplay

- The game is played as non-contact.
- Rosters must have at least 6 participants, with at least 3 Unified partners, and a maximum of 16 participants.
- Game is comprised of two 18-minute running time halves.
- Teams will receive one 1-minute timeout per half.

Rules



Gameplay

- Touchdowns will be worth 6 points.
- For extra points, teams will select to attempt a play from the 5-yard line or the 10-yard line.
 - A successful attempt from the 5-yard line will result in 1 point.
 - A successful attempt from the 10-yard line will result in 2 points.

Rules



Offense

- All possessions, besides interceptions, will start from the 35-yard line.
- The offense will have four plays to cross the 20-yard line.
- If a team reaches midfield, they will receive four additional plays to score a touchdown.
- If the offense fails to cross midfield or score a touchdown in the allotted number of plays, there will be a change of possession.

Rules



Offense

- If the ball is snapped and not caught, the play is dead, and the down is counted.
- There are two “no running zones” on the field of play.
 - One is between the 20- and 25-yard line.
 - The other is between the 0- and 5-yard line.
 - No handoffs are allowed in these zones.
- Only direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are legal.

Rules



Screen Blocking

- Legally obstructing an opponent without contacting them with any part of the screen blocker's body is allowed.
- The screen blocker should have their arms fully extended to the ground, below the waist, either at their side, front or back.
- Downfield blocking is allowed in the form like a screen in basketball.
- Backfield blocking is allowed but must give an opponent at least one stop of space and not initiate contact.

Rules



Defense

- All players who rush the quarterback must be a minimum of 7 yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped.
 - Players not rushing the quarterback may defend the line of scrimmage.
- Once the quarterback hands off the ball, the 7-yard zone no longer exists.
- Interceptions cannot be returned, but the team will start from the spot of the interception but reversed.

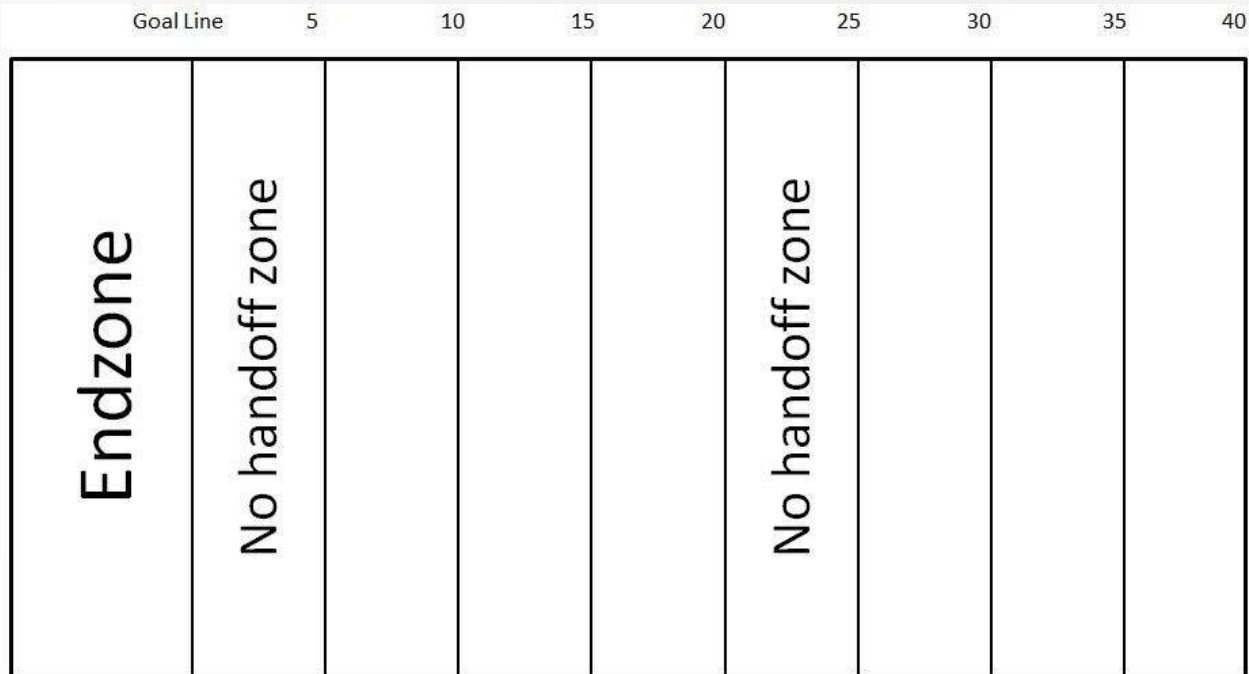
Rules



Unified Partners

- Teams must always have 2 Unified partners and 3 athletes on the field.
- A Unified partner cannot pass to another Unified partner.
- There is no restriction on who can receive a handoff.
- Unified partners on the field during the play can serve as mentors for other players on the team.

Field Layout



All possessions go one direction towards the endzone. New possessions start from the 35 yard line.

- The only possession that does not start from the 35-yard line is an interception.

Penalties



Offense

- All offensive penalties are 10 yards from the line of scrimmage, or half the distance to the goal and a loss of down on a live play.
 - If it is a pre-snap penalty, the team is penalized the yardage and repeats the down.
- The full list of offensive penalties are on page 7 of the Special Olympics Minnesota Handbook.

Penalties



Defense

- All offensive penalties are 10 yards from the line of scrimmage and an automatic first down.
 - The only exception is defensive pass interference, which can be 10 yards or the spot of the foul, as well as the automatic first down.
- The full list of defensive penalties are on page 7 of the Special Olympics Minnesota Handbook.

Individual Skills Rules



Individual Skills is split up into four events:

- Catching: “Run and Catch”
 - Throwing for Accuracy
 - Throwing for Distance
 - Agility and Speed Handoff
-
- More information on skills can be found in the Special Olympics Minnesota handbook on pages 9-12.

Registration



Registration is done online by head coaches or head of delegations.

When a coach registers a team, they must submit the following:

- Assessment score for each athlete.
- Coaches on the team.
- Updated paperwork for those that need it.
- Team Information Sheet

Divisioning



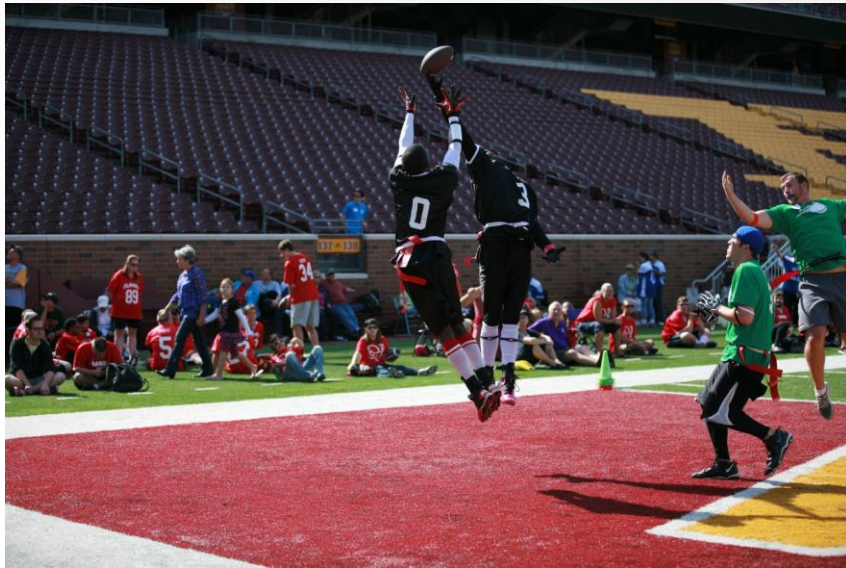
Assessment scores are based on a ranking from the coach. Assessment sheets can be found [here](#).

Divisioning is based on many factors, including:

- Assessment scores.
- Results from previous regional and state competitions.
- Coach's notes.

Divisioning for team sports can be more difficult, so the more information that the state office can have, the better teams will be divisioned for competition.

Practice, Skill Development & Resources



Above: Athlete jumping for a touchdown.

- Special Olympics Minnesota wants to make sure that you have confidence in your knowledge of the flag football rules.
- On the next slide, you will find links to many resources that can help with the training and skill development for athletes.

Practice, Skill Development & Resources



Special Olympics Flag Football Resources

[Special Olympics Minnesota Flag Football Resources](#)

For any questions regarding Special Olympics Minnesota flag football please contact sports@somn.org.

Healthy Athletes



- **Improve** access to health care for athletes at event-based health screenings.
 - Make **referrals** to local health practitioners.
 - **Train** and **educate** health care professionals, providers and students.
 - Healthy Athletes events are often held with sports competitions.
 - Athletes receive 2-4 hours of screenings, education and care.
 - Athletes with follow-up needs receive referrals to local providers.
 - All services are provided by volunteer health professionals and students.
- Contact Jeff Prendergast| Health Programs Coordinator jeff.prendergast@somn.org



FIT FEET
(podiatry)



funFITNESS®
(physical
therapy)



HEALTH
PROMOTION
(better health &
well-being)



HEALTHY HEARING
(audiology)



MedFest®
(sports
physical exam)



OPENING EYES®
(vision)



SPECIAL SMILES®
(dentistry)



STRONG MINDS
(emotional
wellbeing)

SOMN Health Programs



Fit5

- Plan for physical activity, nutrition and hydration
 - 5 fruits and vegetables a day
 - 5 bottles of water a day
 - 5 days of physical activity a week
- Fitness cards offer exercises to challenge abilities. These can be done at practice, the gym and home.
- Seasonal pledge challenges for teams offer incentives and resources.



Start now! Fit5 Guide and Training Cards

- Contact Lindsey Swanson | Health Programs Coordinator
Lindsey.Swanson@somn.org

SOMN Health Programs



SOFit

- Comprehensive health and wellness program focusing on four pillars of wellness: emotional, physical, nutrition, and social.
- Resources and funds provided to delegation or organization
- Check out more info here: [Fitness - Special Olympics Minnesota](#)
- Contact Lindsey Swanson | Health Programs Coordinator
Lindsey.Swanson@somn.org

Above: Athlete working on her squatting.

Coach Recognition Item



- Each coach that becomes Level 2 certified or recertified in a sport can order one coach item per calendar year.
- Information can be found [HERE](#).
- Please note that if you have not completed a Level 2 training or recertification course, or you have already received an item for the year, you will not be shipped an item.

Level 2 Flag Football Quiz



To take the Level 2 Flag Football quiz please [click here](#).



Thank you for volunteering your time, and best of luck with your upcoming season!