



2022 Special Olympics USA Games: Youth Leadership Experience

June 5 – 12, 2022

Overview

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools (UCS) fills an important space in the Special Olympics continuum where young people are engaged to lead in their schools and communities through inclusive sport and leadership activities. Informed by our research and in collaboration with the Local Organizing Committee (LOC), the SONA UCS team's vision is to engage youth leading up to and embedded throughout the 2022 Special Olympics USA Games to reinforce lifetime engagement and promote stories of inclusion for the movement. The Youth Leadership Experience format leverages a different kind of training and activation where youth leaders are integrated in their state delegation and placed in a variety of event volunteer roles.

This immersive experience will span the course of 2022 Special Olympics USA Games events and competition schedule. In Unified pairs, youth leaders will serve in a variety of volunteer roles across functional areas, in addition to supporting their state Program delegation. A combination of holding authentic volunteer roles, engaging in educational and interactive experiences, and shadowing of experienced key volunteers will provide the tools for these young people to become more deeply connected to the Special Olympics movement as committed volunteers, teammates and friends for life.

EVENT COMPONENTS

- Member of State Delegation
- Grow skills during Orientation & General Sessions
- Take part in Networking & Community Building opportunities
- Hold Volunteer Roles in Rotations during 2022 USA Games

Registration

With the 2022 Special Olympics USA Games, the SONA UCS team envisions representation from each state Program delegation as part of the Youth Leadership Experience with one Unified pair and adult mentor. As representatives of their state delegation, they should be treated as any other delegation member receiving delegation gear, attending training camps, participating in fundraisers and send-off events. We encourage as delegation members, the youth leaders and mentors are assigned leadership roles leading up to the event by collecting and sharing stories about competitors, supporting state Program/delegation social media channels and organizing events on behalf of their teams and school.

Participant Requirements

Unified Pair:

- One youth with ID and one youth without ID
- The pair must be the same gender for appropriate housing
- The maximum allowable age range is 15-18 years old (participants must be at least 15 years old and less than 19 years old as of June 1, 2022)
 - Suggested selection for rising high school juniors, so that they are still participating in Special Olympics school-based programming during the 2022-2023 school year.
- Preferred background of youth attendees:
 - Established connection and participate in the same school/community
 - Taken a leadership role with Special Olympics, such as through a Unified Club, YAC or ALP's, experience playing Unified Sports and/or volunteered at Special Olympics events
 - Demonstrate high engagement and express a desire for involvement beyond high school and college

Pre-event Activation:

Unified Pairs & adult mentors are expected to be engaged prior to the Games in the following ways:

- Participation in educational webinars (approx. one per month from January – June)
- Leadership role with their delegation before Games (e.g. assisting with send-off party, social media, story collecting, fundraising)
- Submit a video for a national video contest (details to come)
- Submit an essay or plan explaining how they will be leaders within Special Olympics and inclusion

ROTATIONS

UNIFIED SPORTS

OVERVIEW // The Interscholastic/Intercollegiate Unified Sports rotation will give students a first-hand look at Meaningful Involvement in action through direct game evaluation. Additionally, students will leave this rotation armed with the tools and resources to start a Unified Sports program at his/her school, run a Unified Sports assessment, as well as identify or develop additional Unified opportunities post-graduation.

OUTCOMES // The goal of the Unified Sports rotation is to provide students with a hands-on experience to further develop practical knowledge and understanding of the following;

- The Principle of Meaningful Involvement and its impact on the success of a Unified Sports team or program.
- How to begin a Unified Sports team or program within their school
- How to run a Unified Sports evaluation to determine teams and appropriate Unified Sports models
- How to identify and/or create additional opportunities as students advance/graduate
- How to discuss the potential challenges and concerns presented by school administrators

IMPACT // Provide the Games with potential volunteers to assist with the monitoring, evaluation and promotion of Unified Sports competitions;

- The Games and State Delegations will have students on site who can provide social media coverage during interscholastic and intercollegiate Unified competitions
- State delegations will return with students who are trained as Unified Sports evaluators and who have the basic skills and knowledge to run a Unified Sports team assessment
- State delegations will return with students who are better equipped with tools, resources and practical knowledge to aid in the discussion of Unified Sports development and/or expansion within their schools and communities

SOCIAL MEDIA & STORYTELLING

OVERVIEW // For this rotation, we are intending to prepare YLE participants in advance of the games to be able to provide “look-ins” and social media coverage of State Delegation activity at games. In advance, training will outline policy and procedure related to USA Games social media, introduce participants to social media accounts used by State Programs, introduce storytelling platforms, and get participants to start to think about potential storylines that will culminate at Games. Participants will also have the opportunity to volunteer at installations/stations promoting inclusion and storytelling in “Fan Zone” venues.

OUTCOMES // The goal of the Social Media & Storytelling rotation is to provide students with a hands-on experience to further develop practical knowledge and understanding of the following;

- Nonprofit communications
- Storytelling in 2022

- Use of various social media platforms

Connecting with State Program leadership and community programs

IMPACT // This rotation will provide original, first-hand social media & storytelling content with;

- Youth perspective and tap into social circles of youth
- Inclusive, intergenerational leadership & collaboration
- Dynamic storylines and increased exposure

VOLUNTEER SHADOW

OVERVIEW // The Volunteer Shadow rotation is where youth from the Youth Leadership Experience work alongside staff or distinguished volunteer to gain a better understanding of their functional area based on the shared interests of the youth leaders and goals with their involvement with Special Olympics.

OUTCOMES // The goal of the Volunteer Shadow rotation is to provide students with a hands-on experience to further develop practical knowledge and understanding of the following;

- How events/programs are developed and deeper understanding of key roles and functions
- “Testing out” possible career options for youth
- Networking & an opportunity for all to reflect and learn from others
- Opportunity for hosts to share best practices and to allow for self-development for both the host and youth
- Gain a deeper understanding of organization mission and programming to create sustainable leaders

IMPACT // Impact this rotation will have on the overall Games or State Delegations;

- Co-leadership skill development between youth and adults
- Empower State Delegations to provide meaningful roles for their Unified pairs/youth leaders
- Provide additional support for functional areas/State Delegations
- Create additional voices/imprint within the Games to demonstrate impact
- Create new volunteer pool/role for Games

YOUNG ATHLETES FESTIVAL

OVERVIEW // Young Athletes is an innovative sports play program that introduces children ages two to seven years old, with and without intellectual disabilities to the world of sports. This rotation will have a selection of Young Athletes stations, which include a variety of large motor activities.

OUTCOMES // The goal of the Young Athletes Festival rotation is to provide students with a hands-on experience to further develop practical knowledge and understanding of the following;

- Working with children of all skill levels
- Develop skill set to volunteer or start your own Young Athletes program
- Training and an understanding on how to run a large scale event

IMPACT // This rotation will have on the overall Games or State Delegations (3-5 bullets): (i.e.; it will demonstrate co-leadership between youth and adults)

- Young Athletes gives the volunteers, participants, and parents the opportunity to see the potential all children have for future sports practice
- Having Young Athletes attend USA Games allows the children and families to see the future their child can have with Special Olympics