

Special Olympics Virginia's Volunteer Eligibility Process
Frequently Asked Questions

Who is considered a Class A Volunteer?

Volunteers who have regular, close physical contact with athletes; volunteers in positions of authority or supervision; volunteers in a position of trust with athletes; and volunteers that handle substantial amounts of cash or other assets. Class A Volunteers include:

- Coaches, including assistant coaches
- Unified partners
- Heads of delegations
- Chaperones
- Global Messenger mentors
- Non-hired drivers of athletes
- Area/local council members
- Volunteers who will handle over \$5,000

Are hired drivers considered Class A Volunteers?

No. Programs are not required to conduct the required screening on drivers hired commercially or employed by unrelated agencies (unless those drivers are also acting as Class A Volunteers, such as chaperones at an overnight event). However, programs should ensure that a reputable company is used to transport the athletes and that the company has appropriately screened its drivers and has adequate liability insurance.

Are family members, parents, siblings or extended family members of athletes required to undergo background checks and take Protective Behaviors?

Yes. Family members of athletes are subject to the screening requirements when they are serving in a Class A Volunteer capacity.

Are athletes serving in Class A Volunteer capacities required to undergo background checks and take Protective Behaviors?

Yes. Athletes are subject to the same requirements as other volunteers when they are serving in a Class A Volunteer capacity. An athlete ineligible to volunteer may still be eligible to continue participating as an athlete.

Is an individual who is paid by his/her employer to conduct Special Olympics activities considered a Special Olympics volunteer?

Yes. Individuals who meet the definition of Class A Volunteers are subject to background checks and must take the Protective Behaviors training regardless of whether or not they are being paid by their employer while acting as a Special Olympics volunteer.

Are programs permitted to allow a volunteer to begin serving as a Class A Volunteer prior to completion of the appropriate screening?

No. Volunteers must go through the screening process and take Protective Behaviors prior to serving as a Class A Volunteer for Special Olympics. Note, however, that a person who has completed the registration form and provided proper photo ID may serve as a Class B Volunteer pending completion of appropriate background screening and Protective Behaviors. Class B Volunteers are one day volunteers.

Will a criminal background check conducted by a volunteer's employer satisfy the screening requirement?

No. To ensure that we are obtaining consistent data, each program is required to conduct its own screening on existing and new Class A Volunteers as outlined in the volunteer screening policy.

Are individuals who are not eligible to volunteer in a Class A Volunteer capacity (due to his/her criminal history) permitted to volunteer as a Class B Volunteer?

No. Once a program acquires knowledge that a potential or existing volunteer (Class A or Class B) has a criminal history that would disqualify an individual from volunteering in a Class A capacity, the individual is no longer eligible to volunteer on behalf of Special Olympics in any capacity.

What if a program is notified of an individual's alleged criminal history from a source other than an approved vendor's screening of the individual's background (such as from another volunteer or organization)?

SOVA staff should be notified immediately and appropriate measures will be taken to determine the volunteer's eligibility status.

What if a program is notified of an individual's alleged criminal history and the individual is not an athlete or a volunteer?

If the person does not pose an immediate threat to the health and wellbeing of the athletes and volunteers and is not acting in a disruptive manner, the individual may continue as a Special Olympics spectator.

What if an ineligible volunteer is a family member of an athlete? Can that person continue to attend Special Olympics activities as a spectator?

Yes. If the person does not pose an immediate threat to the health and wellbeing of the athletes and volunteers and is not acting in a disruptive manner, the individual may continue as a Special Olympics spectator.

What if a disqualified volunteer believes that the criminal history record used to determine eligibility is incorrect?

All disqualified volunteers will receive information about how to contact SOVA's vendor if they believe information regarding their criminal history is incorrect.

What if a volunteer does not provide a program with information that is required to conduct the appropriate screening (such as a social security number)?

The individual shall not be permitted to volunteer on behalf of Special Olympics Virginia.

When does an individual become a volunteer?

A person is not considered a Special Olympics volunteer until a person has submitted a completed volunteer registration form, and, in the case of a Class A Volunteer, has undergone the background check screening process and completed the Protective Behaviors training. Additionally, volunteers not registered are NOT covered by Special Olympics insurance policies.