

Special Olympics New Jersey

2014 Coach Conference

Family Engagement

Moderator- Steve Smith: Area Director, Parent and Former LTP Coordinator and Coach

Panel- Terry Nevins: LTP Coordinator

Derek Walker: LTP Coordinator, Coach and Parent

Maria Fischer: Parent

The parent-coach/caretaker relationship is vital to providing athletes the best training and competition experience possible. Coaches must make it a priority to engage their athletes' family members and caretakers.

- In what areas should coaches lean on parents during a season?

- Athlete dietary needs, medical updates

- New life changes that could have a great affect an athlete's ability to focus or drastically change his/her mood during a practice/competition (ex. new boss at work, recent difficulty with a school subject, relationship struggles, etc..)

- Include parents in the writing of your Emergency Action Plan* so that **every** base is covered and all parties are on the same page about what the coaches should do in the event that there is an outstanding problem while the parent is not present (ex. dealing with a seizure, managing aggressive behavior, etc...)

- Keys for coaches to help promote a healthy coach-parent/caretaker relationship:

- Make early, positive contact and let parents/caretakers know that the athletes' growth and improvement in sport is a team effort

- Communicate regularly (ex. weekly email update, pre-practice meetings) to ensure that you are keeping the families in-the-loop with practices and athlete development

- Make times that parents/caretakers can speak with you and communicate when that is (ex. sideline at a game or right before practice begins might not be the best time for you, so be proactive by letting them know when you are available so that you can give them the full attention they deserve)

- How engaged should parents be?

- Sometimes athletes do better when parents stay in the background

- Sometimes parents need to be more engaged for 1:1 assistance

- Common challenges that arise on a team

- Chronic lateness

- Mixed abilities

- New athletes vs. a "full" team

- Playing time

- Set a standard of at-home reinforcement

- Sport vocabulary taught in practice

- Skills that can be practice at home with family

- Sportsmanlike behavior

*An Emergency Action Plan is a step-by-step agenda of what a coach should implement in the event of an athlete emergency. The Plan is intended for medically-based emergencies, but it is encouraged that an EAP is written for athletes who tend to have acute emotional or behavioral episodes, as well. The EAP is a preparation tool for coaches so that, in the event there is an emergency situation that needs special attention, coaches can address the situation as promptly and seamlessly as possible and there isn't time wasted in figuring out what to do.