



Role Description
Mission Staff, Special Olympics Team Ontario

Special Olympics Canada Summer Games – Medicine Hat 2026

Overview: Team Ontario Mission Staff will represent Special Olympics Ontario at the 2026 Special Olympics Canada Summer Games. The Team Ontario Program is designed to provide athletes, coaches and mission staff with a welcoming team environment built on a foundation of **Excellence, Empowerment, Respect, Growth** and **Community**. It will require dedication to training, healthy living and accountability to its team members. Through the efforts and actions, the Team will be ambassadors for Ontario and a source of pride for grassroots programs and communities.

Title: Mission Staff – Athlete Health Messenger, Special Olympics Team Ontario

Scope: The Athlete Health Messenger is a vital member of Team Ontario Mission Staff. This athlete-leader will serve as a peer health advocate, promoting healthy habits, wellness and fitness across all Team Ontario sports. Working collaboratively with Fitness Captains, coaches and mission staff, the Health Messenger will inspire and empower athletes to prepare physically and mentally for the 2026 Special Olympics Canada National Summer Games.

Accountabilities: This position is accountable to the Chef de Mission through the Team Manager and will work closely with the Special Olympics Ontario, Manager – Health & Research Initiatives.

Term: The term of Mission Staff is from the date of selection by Special Olympics Ontario, through the final de-brief and complete of the post-Games report. (approx. Oct 2025 through September 2026)

Responsibilities:

- Conduct oneself in accordance with the conditions outlined in the Team Ontario Mission Staff Agreement form; the Special Olympics Ontario Policy 7000-02 Travelling Teams – Roles and Responsibilities and the Special Olympics Ontario Code of Conduct.

Pre-Games

- Encourage and model healthy habits among Team Ontario athletes, including nutrition, hydration, physical activity, mental health and rest/recovery.
- Co-lead or assist with athlete wellness workshops and/or virtual sessions focused on healthy habits.
- Support athletes in tracking their progress and setting achievable goals.
- Work alongside Fitness Captains in planning and delivering fitness and wellness initiatives to each of their sports/teams.
- Participate in and help lead warm-ups and fitness testing at the Team Ontario Training Camps.
- Assist in collecting and sharing feedback from athletes about what supports or motivates them to stay active and healthy.



- Serve as a role model and health advocate at all official Team Ontario events – including Training Camps and Virtual Sessions.
- Represent the athlete voice in Mission Staff discussions related to athlete well-being.
- Support the Special Olympics Ontario Health Team with resources, presentation or materials for the Team.
- Work within the lines of communication set by the SOTO Leadership Team.
- Have access to a computer and be comfortable working in virtual settings.
- Read and be familiar with all SOTO correspondence and information.

During-Games

- Act as a role model and conduct yourself within the SOTO Program Code of Conduct.
- Provide support to Team Ontario Fitness Captains and continue to work through any health initiatives and/or activities planned.
- Engage with members of SOTO and continue to encourage health and wellness practices.
- Attend all SOTO Team Events/Activities as an athlete leader and ambassador.
- Attend daily Chef/Mission meetings, as scheduled by the SOTO Leadership Team.
- Travel to and from the National Games as part of SOTO.
- House with the SOTO delegation in the Athlete's Village for the entire duration of National Games.
- Have access to a cell phone and be a part of any Group Communication channels outlined by the SOTO Leadership Team.

Post-Games

- Participate in SOTO de-brief sessions and provide feedback on the role of Health Messenger.
- With the SOO Health Team review Health and Promotion practices and provide feedback for future SOTOs.

Qualifications:

- Must have attended the 2024 or 2025 SOO Provincial Games.
- Must be a registered Special Olympics Ontario athlete, in good-standing with their SOO Community.
- Willing to take the *Special Olympics Health Messenger* training.
- Willing to take any additional Professional Development courses/training asked of by SOTO Leadership.
- Experience as a team leader, advocate or peer mentor with the Special Olympics movement.
- Passionate about health, fitness and supporting fellow athletes to be their best selves.
- Strong communication and leadership skills.
- Comfortable with public speaking.
- Able to participate in virtual meetings and in-person events as scheduled.
- Resident of Ontario.
- ***This role is not open to athletes identified as a member of the Team Ontario Training Squad.***



This role is expected to be available for the following time commitments:

- November 7-9, 2025: Team ON Training Camp #1
- November 14-16, 2025: Team ON Training Camp #2
- August 9-16, 2026: National Summer Games
- Monthly Virtual Sessions (will be scheduled in collaboration with the successful candidate)

Disclaimer – The National Games Experience

Attending National Games as a member of Team Ontario is a remarkable achievement and an exciting opportunity that many athletes experience only once in a lifetime. While the experience is incredibly rewarding, it's important for athletes and their parents/guardians to be aware that National Games are highly structured and fast-paced. The schedule is full, with travel, competitions, ceremonies, and team activities all carefully planned. Members of SOTO are expected to follow a set itinerary, which may include early mornings, long days, and limited downtime. At times, there may be periods of waiting between events, and athletes will need to adapt to a "hurry up and wait" environment. Meals, rest periods, and free time are all scheduled in advance, so flexibility and endurance are key. We want every SOTO member to have a successful and positive experience at National Games. For that reason, it's important to consider whether this type of environment is a good fit. Applicants should be comfortable with the following:

- Following a structured schedule with limited rest breaks
- Early morning wake-ups and long travel days
- Traveling on a plane to and from Alberta with the team
- Being supervised by the SOTO Leadership Team for the duration of the trip, this individual most likely will not be from their community
- Participating in events over multiple consecutive days
- Adapting to periods of waiting, often while standing
- Sustaining a fast-paced routine for 7–9 days
- Being away from home and family for an extended period
- Having limited contact with family and friends during the Games
- Must be available for the entire duration of the games from August 9–16, 2026, in Medicine Hat, AB

If any of these expectations present a significant challenge, it may be worth reconsidering whether this position is the right fit at this time. We are proud of every athlete who earns the opportunity to attend, and we want to ensure it is a positive and enriching experience for all involved.

APPLICATION DEADLINE: October 13, 2025

Application Process:



Interested applicants will be required to submit an electronic application via: the Team Ontario Application Page prior to the deadline (above). Please be prepared to submit the following information when applying:

- What excites you about the Health Messenger Role?
- Any previous experiences you have that make you a strong candidate for this role?
- Confirmation that you are available to attend all in-person dates mentioned above.
- A reference from your community/support network supporting your application for this role.

Following the deadline, all applications will be reviewed by SOTO Leadership and SOO Staff. Applications will be reviewed and evaluated based on the following process:

1. Endorsement from local SO Community.
2. Based on endorsements and review of initial applications, SOO will invite a select group of applications to participate in a virtual interview.
3. Following the interview, SOO will evaluate both the virtual interview and submitted questions to name the successful candidate.

Questions about this role and the selection process can be sent to SOTO Games Liaison – Rebecca Norton, prior to the application deadline, at rebeccan@specialolympicsontario.com.