

LYSA TOPSoccer Volunteer Handout

The History of TOPSoccer. US Youth Soccer, the nation's largest youth sports organization, started TOPSoccer in 1991 to provide young players with disabilities an environment filled with meaningful learning, developmental and physical participation opportunities through the game of soccer. Even with a strong history of providing children with disabilities the opportunity to participate in sporting events, the Special Olympics Organization felt that US Youth Soccer could promote TOPSoccer in a more adequate fashion. TOPSoccer is a Lexington Youth Soccer, Kentucky Youth Soccer and US Youth Soccer official program.



What is LYSA TOPSoccer? TOPSoccer (The Outreach Program for Soccer) is a community-based soccer program designed to meet the needs of children and young adults with physical, developmental, and/or intellectual disabilities. Player participation and development are key elements of the program. TOPSoccer is designed to improve the player's overall fitness, self-esteem and social skills. In short, TOPSoccer takes kids from the sidelines to participating in the game. TOPSoccer is a Lexington Youth Soccer, Kentucky Youth Soccer and US Youth Soccer official program. TOPSoccer allows players the opportunity to succeed. Our goal is to provide athletes with physical exercise, team membership, opportunities to develop social skills, provide a network for parents with families of similar life experiences, and allow athletes to learn about soccer and develop soccer skills.

What is the Volunteer Role of a TOPSoccer Coach? A Head Coach must commit at least two hours a week on a weekly basis during each soccer season. A Head Coach must be at least 18 years of age. Head Coaches are responsible for communicating with players and parents, organizing activities for practices, coaching during games, monitoring the working relationship between buddies and players, communicating with the league director and volunteer coordinator. Coaches must also attend at least one coaches meeting each season. All coaches must complete the LYSA Background check form prior to the beginning of the season.

An **Assistant Coach** must be at least 16 years of age and must also be able to commit at least two hours a week on a weekly basis during each soccer season to assist the head coach with practices, games, communications with TOPS families and volunteers in addition to the league director and volunteer coordinator. Coaches may be asked to participate in outside activities such as events at local soccer games, preview nights to recruit players and inform parents and volunteer training. All coaches must complete the LYSA Background check form prior to the beginning of the season.



What is a TOPSoccer Buddy? A TOPSoccer Buddy is an invaluable volunteer who participates directly with individual players or within a team with several players to enable participation in a soccer activity. A buddy is not a player and does not score goals. They help the player succeed and keep them as safe as possible. Buddies can be a caregiver, a family member, an aide, a peer, a teenager or an adult. They can be a soccer player, someone who works with children with special needs, or someone who has no soccer experience, but a strong desire to enable children to have fun. Some examples of the role of the buddy are: Enables player to participate/play; assists/creates/directs/guides/teaches in a FUN but learning environment; continuously monitor/assess the player; role varies widely depending upon needs of the player and Interact with players, coaches, parents

To help address the needs of the athletes, the following strategies may be used:

- Create safe playing situations
- Provide assistance as needed
- Provide instruction directly during play
- Model desired skill
- Help to define the space and “strategies”
- Assist player to focus on the activity
- Provide stability in an often chaotic environment
- Guide and direct, often not touching player directly, but being nearby
- Show activity and environment
- Ensure player understands instructions
- Use touch/sign language/pictures to direct and guide
- Direct the ball to the player for touches and contact
- Create opportunities for play
- Assist player to get into position to play

What we expect of TOPSoccer Volunteers

- To fulfill your commitment. If you agree to volunteer, make every effort to come. Many of the athletes get very attached to their buddies. Get to know the parents of the athlete you are assigned to. Ask them questions. Ask them for comments or concerns. Each player is different and has different needs.
- ***If you cannot come*** make sure your coach and volunteer coordinator know you cannot come. Don't wait until the last minute to let us know.
- Never leave an athlete unattended.
- Praise the athlete for their efforts.
- Report anything you observe, either in the physical environment or in the individual's behavior that may cause harm to them, another athlete or volunteer.
- Report any injury immediately.
- Look for constructive ways to overcome obstacles.
- Do not engage in inappropriate contact or relationships with the athlete and report any inappropriate touching or actions by the athlete.
- Set a good example in appearance, conduct, language and sportsmanship.

Numbers of Interest

Volunteer Coordinator:	Janice Birdwhistell	jeb147@aol.com	859 229-7670
League Director:	Jessie Birdwhistell	jessie.bird@uky.edu	859 608-4160
Registration:			859 223-5632
Weather Hotline:			859 288-1044

Web Page:

www.lysa.org/tops/