

# **SAA TOPSoccer Volunteer Guidance Summary**

## **Welcome to TOPSoccer!**

***Thank you for volunteering!!!!***

TOPSoccer (The Outreach Program for Soccer) is a community-based training and team placement program for young athletes with disabilities, organized by youth soccer association volunteers. The program is designed to bring the opportunity of learning and playing soccer to any boy or girl, who has a mental or physical disability. Our goal is to enable the thousands of young athletes with disabilities to become valued and successful members of the US Youth Soccer family.

TOPSoccer was formed to foster the physical, mental and emotional growth and development of America's youth through the sport of soccer at all levels of age and competition." There are thousands of children with disabilities who need, and can be provided with, the opportunity to play soccer through the TOPSoccer program. The program is intended for kids aged 5 and older that have mental and/or physical disabilities. We will have different kinds of equipment to accommodate the various forms of disabilities. Everyone who wants to play will be accommodated in such a way so that they can play.

We will offer a 1 hour session, once a week, for 8 weeks in the fall and 8 weeks in the spring, weather permitting. Each session will consist of some technical exercises to learn different aspects of soccer followed by some games between the participants.

### **Tips for first time volunteers**

#### **HAVE FUN**

If you are having fun then the player you are working with is going to have fun too. Just like any child, these players can pick up on your mood and excitement levels so really enjoy yourself. Celebrate successes with high-fives and fist-bumps. Smile as much as possible. The players will give you their best if you are fully engaged with them.

#### **FOCUS**

You are here to work as well. Please don't spend time kicking the ball with a friend once you have been assigned a player to work with. Give the player 100% of your attention for the short time you are with them.

## **STAY WITH THE PLAYER AT ALL TIMES**

The only time you should not be with your player is if they need to use the restroom. Their parents are on site and they will handle that. Otherwise, unless instructed differently, go with your player wherever they go including all water breaks.

## **ITS OK TO DO OTHER THINGS**

If your player wants to do something differently from the group, that's ok. Roll with it. Give them a few minutes and see if they want to re-join the group a few minutes later. Even if they are doing something different from the group, the one-on-one socialization you are providing them is very important.

## **DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK FOR HELP**

If you are not sure what to do in a certain situation, just ask the coach or an experienced volunteer. We don't mind and we don't expect you to know everything given your experience level. If needed, you can ask the player's parent for help or suggestions as well.

## **IF THEY ARE HAVING A BAD DAY**

Try not to take it personally. It likely has nothing to do with you. Many of our players can get upset from something that happened earlier in the day and it may carry forward into our time with them. Try your best to calm them down and have fun. Ask for help if you struggle with a behavior issue.

## **DURING GAMES**

We always end the sessions with small sided games that are based on the player's age and ability levels.

If you are with a high functioning, mobile player, they may not need your help during the game. Stand off to the sidelines and end lines and help keep the game moving by keeping the ball from going out of bounds. If possible, pass it to a player that you recognize may not have touched the ball recently.

If your player needs your help to play, focus on getting them into good positions to receive the ball and help guide the ball to their feet. It is ok to sometimes provide some "blocking" for them to make sure they get a few touches on the ball. Use your good judgment on when this is necessary

A volunteer never shoots or scores, they only help facilitate play.

**BEFORE YOU LEAVE**

Let the player know that you enjoyed your time with them and encourage them to keep learning and playing soccer.

**TELL YOUR FRIENDS**

If you had a good time, please come back again. We are always looking for players and volunteers so please let people know about our program so everyone can have fun.