



ASA DISABILITY INFORMATION/AWARENESS DOCUMENT

Purpose - To enhance the sense of community for all members of the WingMan Program by fostering increased understanding about different types of disabilities thereby strengthening interactions with ASA Athletes.

1. To help new WingMen feel better prepared to interact with ASA Athletes.
2. To increase WingMan retention.
3. To ensure the highest possible safety in all situations.
4. To ensure consistency across all areas.
5. To utilize the expertise of our WingMan Nation who work in this field and therefore appreciating their talents.
6. To more deeply connect with Athletes and their parents in an effort to increase their level of comfort and trust.

Goal - To provide additional training resources for all members of our WingMan community.

1. Provide the below document online on the WingMan Resource Page for all to access
2. Provide the below document online on the Captain Resource Page for Captains to access.
3. Provide a link to the document in the First WingMan Letter that is sent to all new WingMen.
4. To provide a link to the document in the yearly Once Cause Fundraising link for all new and returning WingMen and Captains.
5. To create a postcard that will be included in all Welcome Back and Welcome Pack envelopes that are sent to all new and returning Athletes, WingMen, and Captains.
6. To create and provide yearly training sessions for anyone interested in attending in strategic locations and at strategic times of year hosted by staff and the following community volunteers:
 - a. WingMen who work in this field.
 - b. Athlete Family members.
 - c. Athletes (when appropriate).
 - d. Guest Speakers or experts.
7. To comply with the Strategic Plan recommendations:
 - a. Strategic Goal I - WingMan recruitment and retention.
 - b. Strategic Goal III, 2, 3 - Establish training materials.

- c. Strategic Goal V, 3 - Ensure that all communities operate in a consistent fashion.



ASA DISABILITY INFORMATION/AWARENESS DOCUMENT

1. Mission - To enhance the capacity of our WingMan Community to have a foundational understanding of ASA Athletes with disabilities. By building awareness within our community we will enhance our WingMan's ability to fully engage with all ASA Athletes increasing the sense of community for all.
2. What is a Disability - A physical or intellectual impairment that limits a person's movements, senses, and activities.
3. Types of Disabilities –
 - a. Physical/mobility - a physical or mobility impairment caused by a number of factors such as disease, spinal cord injury, congenital disorders that results in the loss of independent mobility.
 - b. Intellectual - Significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior that affects a range of everyday social, conceptual, and practical skills.
 - c. Genetic - An inherited medical condition caused by a DNA abnormality
 - i. Many of our athletes have very rare genetic disorders affecting fewer than 200,000 people in the US.
 - d. Acquired - A disability that has developed during the person's lifetime from an accident or an illness.
4. ASA Community Structure –
 - a. Volunteer Community Coordinator – An individual who manages all members of their local ASA community and who is the main contact for all races and group run events.
 - i. Race and Group Run management includes pairing teams and creating a race document that is sent to all team members at least one week prior to each race which includes all race day information.
 - b. Athlete – An individual with a mobility disability wishing to participate in mainstream running events that is aided in doing so by racing with a WingMan team.

- i. An Athlete Profile will be provided at all group runs and races and includes information about:
 - 1. Contact information
 - 2. Type if disability and communication
 - 3. Medical needs that may arise while running (nutrition, hydration...)
 - c. Captain – An individual who has been a WingMan for at least a year, has received additional training regarding the WingMan Program, and is background checked every two years.
 - i. Captains manage all aspects of the WingMan team running together during races and group runs including:
 - 1. The health and safety of ASA Athlete.
 - 2. The health and safety of all WingMan team members.
 - 3. Manages the pace and jogger pushing rotation of all WingMen.
 - ii. Captains will contact their assigned ASA Athlete’s parent/guardian prior to every race to introduce themselves and to ensure that all Athlete Profile information is updated and that there are clear expectations about what may be needed on race day.
 - iii. Captains will contact all WingMen team members prior to race day to introduce themselves and to share information about their assigned ASA Athlete and answer any pre-race questions.
 - d. WingMan - Volunteer runner who runs as part of the WingMan team in group runs and races.
 - i. WingMen interact with ASA Athletes but are not responsible for the direct care of any ASA Athlete. WingMen share the jogger pushing in races and group runs.
 - e. WingMan Team - Captain, Athlete, WingMen assigned to run together during a race or a group run
- 5. ASA Athletes have a variety of disabilities as noted on their Athlete profiles. Examples include:
 - a. Cerebral Palsy - A group of disorders that affect movement, muscle tone, and posture.
 - i. Caused by damage to the immature brain as it develops most often before birth.
 - ii. Different types of brain damage result in different types of movements
 - 1. Spastic Cerebral Palsy is the most common type of CP causing increased muscle tone presenting with jerky movements.

- b. Epilepsy/Seizure Disorder - A group of disorders that cause changes in behavior, movement, feelings, and levels of consciousness.
 - i. A seizure is the result of a sudden uncontrolled electrical disturbance in the brain.
 - ii. Never restrain or put anything in the mouth of a person having a seizure
 - iii. An athlete may remain in the jogger during a seizure, do not try to move them. If possible, time the duration of the seizure.
 - iv. Click [HERE](#) for seizure management

- c. Osteogenesis Imperfecta/Brittle Bone Disease - A genetic disorder that results in fragile bones that break easily.
 - i. Never move or position an athlete with this disease as their bones are tremendously fragile and can break with sudden movement.

- d. Rett Syndrome - A genetic disorder affecting brain development seen mostly in girls. Despite being caused by a gene mutation it is rarely inherited.
 - i. Leads to severe impairments in nearly every aspect of life, speaking, walking, eating, breathing.
 - ii. Evidence demonstrates that people with Rett Syndrome understand far more than they are able to communicate.
 - iii. They can express a wide spectrum of moods and emotions.

- e. Spina Bifida - A birth defect that happens when a baby's backbone (spine) does not form normally. This varies from mild to severe.
 - i. There may be few problems when mild, to severe weakness, loss of bladder control, paralysis in severe cases.
 - ii. Many of our Athletes use wheelchairs which they can self-propel
 - iii. Make sure to tuck their legs properly into the jogger.

- f. Muscular Dystrophy - A genetic disorder resulting in a group of diseases that cause progressive weakness and loss of muscle mass.
 - i. Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy is the most common and affects mostly boys.
 - ii. People with Muscular Dystrophy are typically cognitively intact.

- g. Scoliosis - A sideways curvature to the back that occurs most often during the growth spurt just before puberty. This can be the result of Cerebral Palsy or Muscular Dystrophy but mostly the cause is unknown.
 - i. You will see this in many athletes and they may need specific pillows or wedges to fit comfortably in a jogger.
 - ii. Athletes, parents of caregivers will demonstrate appropriate positions of the support.

- h. Brain injury - A traumatic brain injury usually results from a violent blow or jolt to the head, or an object that penetrates brain tissue.
 - i. Depending upon the severity and the location of the injury they may have difficulty concentrating, thinking, understanding, or an inability to recognize common things.
 - ii. Some may demonstrate impulsivity, irritability, decreased safety awareness, and word repetition.
 - iii. Remember to ensure safety and to speak calmly.

 - i. Cerebellar Atrophy or Degeneration - A process in which nerve cells in the cerebellum (the area of the brain that controls coordination and balance) deteriorate or die.
 - i. The most common characteristic is a wide-based, unsteady, lurching walk
 - ii. Symptoms may also include slurred speech and rapid small eye movements.

 - j. Autism - A developmental disorder of variable severity that is characterized by impaired social interactions and communication.
 - i. Common symptoms include difficulty with communication, obsessive interests, and repetitive behaviors.

 - k. Cortical blindness - A total or partial loss of vision in a normal appearing eye caused by damage to the brain.
 - i. Vision may be variable, changing day to day.
 - ii. Peripheral vision may be functional, athletes may look directly at you or they may turn their head to see you with their peripheral vision.
6. Impact of disabilities - The impact of a disability can affect every aspect of a person's life and that of their family. These disorders are not only medical conditions that impact the physical condition of ASA Athletes, but are conditions that may also impact their psychological and social health. Examples include:
- a. Multiple and various medical needs.
 - b. Various levels of physical abilities.
 - c. Various ways of communicating with others.
 - d. Various social, emotional, behavioral ways of interacting with others.

7. Adaptive Equipment –

- a. Wheelchair - There are many types and use depends upon the needs of each Athlete.
 - i. Our Captains may assist transferring Athletes from their wheelchair to the jogger but only with the direction and help of the parent and caregiver.
 - ii. WingMen do not assist in transferring Athletes.
 - b. Ventilator - This is a machine that moves air through a person's lungs and is often needed in people who have spinal cord injuries.
 - i. Only Captains trained by the parent/caregiver will manage anything having to do with the use of a ventilator.
 - ii. WingMen does not assist with ventilators.
 - c. Gastrostomy Tube (G-Tube) - This is a surgically placed device used to provide direct access to the stomach for feeding, hydration, medication.
 - i. Only Captains trained by the parent/caregiver will manage anything having to do with a G-Tube.
 - ii. As a WingMan please note whether or not your Athlete can take any nutrition or hydration by mouth. This information is provided on the Athlete Profile.
 - d. Tracheostomy Tube - This is a tube that is inserted into the trachea for the primary reason of establishing and maintaining an open airway.
 - i. Only Captains trained by the parent/caregiver will manage anything having to do with a Tracheal Tube.
 - ii. WingMen do not assist with Tracheal Tubes.
8. Running as part of a WingMan Team - All health information can be found for your Athlete on the Athlete Profile. Once you have received your race day team assignment from your Community Coordinator, you will receive an email from the ASA Captain assigned to your team. The Athlete Profile should be attached to this email, feel free to request it if you don't receive it. The profile is to help you to get to know your Athlete before race day. You will also find this profile in the back of every jogger at every group run and at every race.

Although your Captain will manage the safety and health of your Athlete it is important for you to be aware of the following information:

- a. Hydration - Does your Athlete take hydration by mouth or not.
- b. Nutrition - Does your Athlete take nutrition by mouth or not.
- c. Heat - Does your Athlete have any heat sensitivity, if so ask them how they are doing as you progress on your run.
- d. Cold - Does your Athlete have any cold sensitivity, if so ask if they are cold or need extra layers.

- e. Physical supports - Many of our Athletes have support needs and their parents, caregivers will provide what is needed. Don't hesitate to ask your Athlete (or their parents) how you can help place a support for them, you may be able to help with that while you're running.
9. Disability Etiquette - Our goal is for every ASA Athlete and all members of our program to feel loved, significant, and valued and we do this by treating everyone with respect and dignity.
- a. Personal Privacy - Please remember to respect personal privacy. Although ASA Athletes sign a privacy release, please ask if you may take their picture first.
 - b. Personal Space - A wheelchair is considered to be an extension of an Athlete, please ask prior to touching a wheelchair.
 - c. Offering Help - We are so grateful that you have joined our program and we know how much you'd like to help. Feel free to offer help whenever you sense that it may be needed. Ask the Athlete first for direction and if you need additional instructions ask the parent or caregiver, they're all good at providing instructions and love being asked! You can also ask the Captain of your team what he/she may need help with.
 - d. How to address ASA Athletes - Respect is important to all of us.
 - i. Use people-first language, "Ian, who has cerebral palsy".
 - ii. Use age appropriate language, adults with disabilities are adults.
 - iii. Always start a conversation by introducing yourself.
 - iv. For those in wheelchairs kneeling to eye level is helpful.
 - v. Speak directly to the Athlete rather than whoever is along with them.
 - vi. To get the attention of someone with a hearing disability, tap the person gently on the shoulder or wave your hand, you do not need to raise your voice.
 - vii. When greeting a person with vision loss, always identify yourself and others who may be with you.
 - viii. Give your whole, unhurried attention.
 - ix. Keep your manner encouraging.
 - x. It may take a few minutes for a response, be patient.
 - xi. Speak slowly and clearly.
 - xii. When necessary, ask questions that require short answers.
 - xiii. Never pretend to understand if you are having difficulty doing so, repeat what you do understand and wait for a reaction.
 - xiv. It may be helpful to ask yes or no questions for some Athletes who have cognitive disabilities.
 - xv. RELAX - our Athletes are really excited to meet you and to spend time with you, it's ok if you don't feel immediately at ease, it will come and you'll have a great time! Connect on common interests while running, music, sports...

10. Helpful Handouts - See Attachments below

[Words with Dignity](#)

[People First Language](#)

[Disability etiquette](#)

11. The content of this document is for information only, and does not guarantee any outcome. Information was gathered and shared from reputable sources; however, ASA is not responsible for errors or omissions in reporting or explanation. This document does not provide medical advice, and is not a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Never ignore medical advice because of something you may have read in this document. No individuals, including those participating in ASA, should use the information, resources, or tools contained herein to treat any health-related condition.