



AB | NT | NU

Program Assistant Guidelines

Skate Canada: Alberta-NWT/Nunavut (Section) considers the role of Program Assistant (PA) to be that of a volunteer. The PA position was developed to provide a volunteer experience for skaters to assist with CanSkate and Group STARSkate programs. PAs are not employees, contractors or professional coaches and are not compensated for volunteer activities. PA volunteer contributions may be recognized in many different ways, and the following information can be used as a guideline.

All PAs must be currently registered Skate Canada members to be eligible to volunteer during a session. It is suggested that PAs be over the age of 11 and have the ability to demonstrate basic skating skills (e.g. STAR 3 free skating assessment). The club has the option to accept younger PAs with the understanding that duties assigned should match their abilities and skill levels. The specific duties assigned to all PAs must be appropriate for their ages and abilities.

Program Assistant Training

All PAs must receive training from the club/skating school on an annual basis. Appropriate training prior to assisting with the CanSkate or Group STARSkate programs should provide an overview of expectations and the skills and support required to work with the skaters.

Program assistants (PAs) are individuals who have been trained by the club CanSkate coach to assist in the delivery of the CanSkate program. They may vary in age and background (figure skating, hockey, adult). They must have adequate skating skills and knowledge to be of service. Roles assigned to each PA must be appropriate for his or her age and ability.

The role of the PA is to:

- Assist or lead warm-ups, group activities or cool-downs
- Lead circuits and rotations
- Assist with the set-up of circuits and stations
- Provide assistance to skaters who may have additional needs
- Take attendance
- Time speed skills
- Provide general assistance to the coaches on the session
- Provide encouragement and general feedback to skaters
- May assist with tracking of skill acquisition

A PA's role does not include:

- Delivering lessons at a designated teaching station
- Instructing skills
- Assessing skills

PAs are demonstrators and helpers and should not be coaching or instructing on a CanSkate session.

Types of Recognition

Program Assistants are encouraged to volunteer a minimum number of hours prior to receiving recognition. The club/skating school is free to set this minimum number, and as a point of reference, some use 20 hours as the minimum.

Recognition given for Program Assistants vary and may include any of the following:

- **Non-monetary recognition**
Recognizing the Program Assistant at the club/skating school year end banquet, recognizing a Program Assistant of the Month, provide Program Assistants with the opportunity to be featured in the carnival, ice show or demonstration day etc.
- **Honorarium**
When the amount is \$500 and over per calendar year, clubs/skating schools must refer to the Canada Revenue Agency policies. (Please see Legislative Requirements below). Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) regulations state that all honoraria payments are considered taxable income under the Income Tax Act of Canada and are to be reported as “Employment income not reported on slips”.
- **Gift Certificates**
- **Acknowledgement letter for a PA’s resume or portfolio**
- **Credit towards high school volunteer work requirement**
- **Gifts of appreciation**
This type of gift is at the discretion of the club/skating school. Examples are: ice fees, membership dues, club clothing, and competition entry fees.

The types of recognition are determined by the club or skating school. Clubs/skating schools are encouraged to be creative and to provide Program Assistants recognition that is of value to them.

Legislative Requirements

When a club/skating school provides a value of \$500 and above, they must comply with Canada Revenue Agency regulations relating to income, taxable benefits, honorariums and gifts which may include preparation of T4A slips. Compensating PAs for the activities they do may be deemed as paid work and the Alberta Employment Standards Act must also be followed.

Tracking hours or calculating recognition based on recorded hours may indicate that the activities are not volunteer activities but are an employment or contractual relationship. It is acceptable to differentiate the recognition for PAs who participate in one CanSkate session and PAs who participate in two sessions. The gifts may be similar but the PA who volunteers more hours may receive recognition of more value.

Additional resources regarding tax or employment standards can be found below:

- Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) – [Types of income to report on a T4A slip](#)
- Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) – [Special payments chart](#) for special payments made to employees or recipients
- Alberta Occupational Health & Safety (OHS) Legislation - OHS legislation (Workplace Health & Safety) applies to protect the “worker/volunteer”. As a result, anyone (including volunteers) considered to be providing a service to the organization where they have been scheduled or asked to provide a service (ie assessments, judging, assisting coaches, etc.) is required to follow the OHS Act. See the [Are students and Volunteers Workers?](#) bulletin for additional information
- Alberta Youth Employment Standards: Rules for youth employment only apply to employees, not self-employed contractors or volunteers. If the organization employs youth then [Youth employment laws](#) apply.