



Special Olympics provides year-round sports training and competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. Activities exist for those of all ability levels, from the highly functioning to the severely challenged. Anyone may participate if they meet the eligibility criteria of having an intellectual disability or a similar developmental disability. There is no upper age limit for participation.

Special Olympics transforms lives through the joy of sport, every day, everywhere. We are the world's largest sports organization for people with intellectual disabilities with 5.6 million athletes in 172 countries. Here in Florida, we are serving over 44,400 athletes, with the support of 31,000 dedicated volunteers and coaches.

## **Games**

Special Olympics Florida offers ongoing training and sports competitions held at each organizational level, culminating in State Games. The State Games feature Opening and Closing Ceremonies, the lighting of the Special Olympics "Flame of Hope," awards ceremonies and a variety of social activities that are modeled after the Olympic Games. County, area and state level games and tournaments are held each year throughout the state.

## **Sports**

Fall Classic Sports: Cheerleading, Flag Football, Gymnastics, Powerlifting, Softball

Summer Games Sports: Athletics, Bocce, Cycling, MATP\*, Soccer, Tennis, Volleyball

Additional sports with separate competitions: Basketball, Bowling, Equestrian, Golf, Stand Up Paddle, Surfing, Swimming

Sports Offered at County/Area Level Only: Alpine Skiing, Figure, Speed & Roller Skating, Sailing

\*Non-competitive Motor Activities Training Program (MATP) for athletes with profound challenges.

## **Unified Champion Schools**

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools is an education-based project that uses sports and education programs to activate young people to develop school communities where all youth are agents of change – fostering respect, dignity and advocacy for people with intellectual disabilities.

## **Healthy Athletes®**

The Healthy Athletes initiative is designed to help Special Olympics athletes improve their health and fitness and their ability to train and compete in Special Olympics, through the provision of free health exams and referral where necessary. Special Olympics Healthy Athletes provides health assessment, health education, disease prevention and, in some cases, corrective health care for Special Olympics athletes. Disciplines include: Special Smiles, Opening Eyes, Healthy Hearing, FUNfitness, Health Promotion, Fit Feet, Strong Minds, and MedFest.



### **Healthy Community**

Healthy Community is a premier, health care delivery approach that focuses on the whole person with an intellectual or developmental disability and provides integrated health care coordination that includes primary health care. Healthy Community offers services such as health care screenings and timely follow-up care; access to quality vision wear, hearing aids and insoles; family health forums; healthcare training specific to serving persons with a vast array of intellectual and developmental disabilities; opportunities to participate in community sports fitness and Special Olympics programs; centralized tracking of health care records; access to premier health care through collaboration with community and medical partners, advocacy for all participants ; and health care mentors through university and hospital partners.

### **Athlete Leadership**

Athlete Leadership allow athletes to explore opportunities for Special Olympics participation in roles previously considered “non-traditional.” Our athletes are serving as board members, staff members, local/area committee members, officials, assistant coaches, volunteers, and much more! One such opportunity is being a Global Messenger – a self-advocacy program where athletes are trained in public speaking and to raise public awareness about Special Olympics.

### **Young Athletes**

Young Athletes is an innovative sports play program for children 2-7 with intellectual disabilities along with their siblings and their peers, designed to introduce them into the world of sport. This program helps children improve fundamental physical, cognitive and social skills consistent with Sports Olympics sports. Programs may be implemented in a group setting (agency, school, etc.) or conducted at home by parents.

### **Little ELITES**

Little ELITES (Elementary Level Introduction To Entry-level Sports) is a sports program that bridges the gap between Special Olympics Young Athletes (ages 2-7) and competitive Special Olympics sports (ages 8+) concepts and models. The program is ideal for children in 2nd through 5th grade allowing them to continue to work on their skills in specific sport(s) through structured school-based means of participation and eventually compete within the community.

### **Funding**

Special Olympics athletes are given opportunities to participate without regard to economic, demographic, religious, or social factors, as a means to achieve physical fitness, self-esteem and the life skills necessary to be productive, respected and contributing members of their communities. Neither athletes nor parents are charged a fee to participate in the program. This is crucial, as many of our participants live at or below the poverty level. We rely upon the generosity of individual and corporate contributions. Founded in 1972, Special Olympics Florida is a registered 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization.