



WHAT IS SPECIAL OLYMPICS?

Special Olympics is a global organization that unleashes the human spirit through the transformative power and joy of sport, everyday around the world. Through programming in sports, health, education and community building, Special Olympics is changing the lives of people with intellectual disabilities tackling the injustice, isolation, intolerance and inactivity they face throughout the world. **Special Olympics Illinois does not charge athletes or their families to participate in the program.**

HOW MANY PEOPLE DOES SPECIAL OLYMPICS SERVE?

With 225 Accredited Programs in 170 countries, Special Olympics is providing opportunities for more than 4 million athletes, 1 million volunteers and millions more people including family members, supporters, and fans.

WHAT IS THE SPECIAL OLYMPICS ATHLETE OATH?

“Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.”

WHAT IS SPECIAL OLYMPICS' MISSION?

To provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

WHAT IMPACT DOES SPECIAL OLYMPICS HAVE ON ATHLETES?

Children and adults with intellectual disabilities who participate in Special Olympics develop improved physical fitness and motor skills, greater self-confidence and a more positive self-image. They grow mentally, socially and spiritually and, through their activities, exhibit boundless courage and enthusiasm, enjoy the rewards of friendship and ultimately discover not only new abilities and talents but “their voices” as well.

WHO LEADS SPECIAL OLYMPICS?

Timothy Shriver serves as Chairman of the Board. Special Olympics guides local, area, state/provincial and national Programs around the world. A volunteer Board of Directors determines international policies and is composed of business and sport leaders,

professional athletes, educators and experts in intellectual disability from around the world.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IN SPECIAL OLYMPICS?

To be eligible to participate in Special Olympics, you must be at least 8 years old and identified by an agency or professional as having one of the following conditions: intellectual disabilities, cognitive delays as measured by formal assessment, or significant learning or vocational problems due to cognitive delay that require or have required specially designed instruction. The Special Olympics Young Athletes™ program was created for children with intellectual disabilities ages 2 through 7. **Special Olympics Illinois does not charge athletes or their families to participate in the program.**

CAN INDIVIDUALS WITH PROFOUND DISABILITIES PARTICIPATE IN SPECIAL OLYMPICS?

Yes, through Special Olympics Motor Activities Training Program (MATP), developed by physical educators, physical therapists and recreation therapists. MATP emphasizes training and participation rather than competition.

WHAT IS DIVISIONING?

In Special Olympics competitions, athletes of all ability levels are encouraged to participate, and every athlete is recognized for his or her performance. Through a process called divisioning, Special Olympics competitions are structured so that athletes compete with other athletes of similar ability in equitable divisions.

WHEN ARE SPECIAL OLYMPICS WORLD GAMES HELD?

The Special Olympics World Summer Games are held every four years; the 2011 World Summer Games were held in Athens, Greece; the 2015 World Summer Games will be held in Los Angeles. The Special Olympics World Winter Games also are held every four years; the 2013 World Winter Games were held in Pyeongchang, Korea. The first Special Olympics Games were held in Chicago, Illinois, in 1968.

ARE THERE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SPECIAL OLYMPICS AND PARALYMPICS?

Yes, Special Olympics and the Paralympics are two separate and distinct organizations with specific eligibility requirements.