



Special Olympics Illinois provides a spectrum of program choices for people with intellectual disabilities or related developmental disabilities. All of the programs offered by Special Olympics Illinois provide athletes with the opportunities to develop the necessary sports skills, as well as the benefits of self-esteem, physical fitness and socialization.

Special Olympics embraces athletes of all ability levels. While some athletes may go on to compete in community-based programs, others may choose to remain involved in the traditional Special Olympics programs. Either way Special Olympics athletes train for more than just a sport, they train for life!

Traditional Sports Program

Special Olympics Illinois offers sports training and competition in 19 Olympic-type sports for anyone ages 8 and older with an *Intellectual Disability**. Year-round opportunities are available in individual and team sports (see chart below).

Player Development Model

The goal of Player Development programming is to create meaningful involvement and better serve athletes not ready for traditional Special Olympics Illinois competition. Athletes who may be best suited for this model are individuals who need modifications, rule adaptations, coach assistance or may be between Motor Activities Training Program (MATP) and traditional programs due to behavioral challenges or sensory sensitivities. Player Development participation will foster an environment conducive to building the necessary sports skills and fundamentals to potentially transition to traditional competition.

Motor Activities Training Program (MATP)

Emphasizing training and participation rather than competition, the Motor Activities Training Program (MATP) was developed to provide a sports experience for those with severe and profound disabilities. It is part of the commitment by Special Olympics to offer sports training to eligible athletes of all ability levels.

Young Athletes Program (ages 2-7)

Young Athletes introduces children with intellectual disabilities and their families to the world of Special Olympics through an innovative sports play program. These activities will help children improve physically, cognitively and socially. It will also serve as an introduction to the world of Special Olympics while showing resources and support available within Special Olympics Illinois

Unified Sports

Unified Sports® combine approximately equal numbers of Special Olympics and non-Special Olympics athletes of similar age and ability on teams that compete against other Unified Sports® teams.

Unified Sports® is an important program, as it expands sports opportunities for athletes seeking new challenges and dramatically increases integration in the community.

Special Olympics Illinois currently offers Unified Sports® competition at the state level in the following sports: Bocce, Golf, Tennis & Volleyball

Athlete Leadership Program (ALPs)

Special Olympics Athlete Leadership Programs (ALPs) allow athletes to explore opportunities for participation in roles previously considered "non-traditional." Through ALPs, athletes serve on Boards of Directors or local organizing committees. Athletes excel as spokespersons, team captains, coaches and officials.

ALPs initiatives also provide an excellent way for Special Olympics athletes to demonstrate to the larger community their talents and interests that may have gone unnoticed before.