



PHILOSOPHY

Special Olympics is founded on the belief that people with intellectual disabilities can, with proper instruction and encouragement, learn, enjoy and benefit from participation in individual and team sports. Special Olympics also believes that through millions of individual acts of inclusion where people with and without intellectual disabilities are brought together, long-standing myths are dispelled, negative attitudes changed and new opportunities to embrace and celebrate people with intellectual disabilities are created.

Mission and Vision

- **Special Olympics' mission** is 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.
- **Special Olympics' vision** is to transform communities by inspiring people throughout the world to open their minds, accept and include people with intellectual disabilities and thereby anyone who is perceived as different.

Key Principles

Special Olympics operates worldwide in accordance with the following principles:

- That the goal of Special Olympics is to help bring all persons with intellectual disabilities into the larger society under conditions whereby they are accepted, respected and given a chance to become productive citizens.
- That, as a means of achieving this goal, Special Olympics encourages its more capable athletes to move from Special Olympics training and competition into school and community programs where they can compete in regular sports activities. It is the athlete's choice whether or not to continue involvement in Special Olympics.
- That all Special Olympics activities—at the local, state/provincial, national and international levels—reflect the values, standards, traditions, ceremonies and events embodied in the modern Olympic movement. These Olympic-type activities have been broadened and enriched to celebrate the moral and spiritual qualities of persons with intellectual disabilities in order to enhance their dignity and self-esteem.
- That participation in Special Olympics training programs and competitive events is open to all people with intellectual disabilities who are at least 8 years old, regardless of the degree of their disability.
- That comprehensive, year-round sports training is available to every Special Olympics athlete, conducted by well-qualified coaches in accordance with the standardized Sports Rules formulated and adopted by Special Olympics, and that each athlete who participates in Special Olympics will be trained in their sport.
- That every Special Olympics Program includes sports events and activities that are appropriate to the age and ability level of each athlete.



- That Special Olympics provides full participation for every athlete regardless of economic circumstance and conducts training and competition under the most favorable conditions possible, including facilities, administration, training, coaching, officiating and events.
- That at every Awards Ceremony, in addition to the traditional medals for first, second and third places, athletes finishing from fourth to last place are presented a suitable place ribbon with appropriate ceremony.
- That, to the greatest extent possible, Special Olympics activities will be run by and involve local volunteers, from school and college-age individuals to senior citizens, in order to foster greater understanding of intellectual disabilities.
- That, although Special Olympics is primarily a program of sports training and competition, efforts are made to offer athletes a full range of artistic, social and cultural experiences through activities such as dances, art exhibits, concerts, visits to historic sites, clinics, theatrical performances and similar events.
- That the "Spirit of Special Olympics"—skill, courage, sharing and joy—incorporates universal values that transcend all boundaries of geography, nationality, political philosophy, gender, age, race or religion.