Special Olympics North America

General Orientation

“Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.”
– Special Olympics Athlete Oath
Welcome!

Thank you for taking the time to learn about Special Olympics.

• Special Olympics North America serves over 1,027,000 athletes and Unified Sports teammates with the help of 133,000 coaches and over 686,000 volunteers.

We hope this General Orientation will provide you with...

• An understanding of the mission of Special Olympics

• Insight on how Special Olympics is structured and what makes it unique from other sports programs

• Information on what Special Olympics offers beyond the field of play
Special Olympics Mission

Special Olympics provides 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 the sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

**Components**
- Sports training & competition
- Leadership
- Health Screenings

**Outcomes**
- Physical fitness
- Courage & joy
- Sharing gifts & skills
- Friendship
  - Families
  - Athletes
  - Community
Philosophy & Vision

If individuals with intellectual disabilities can:

• Receive appropriate instruction and encouragement
• Receive constant training
• Compete among those with equal abilities

The results can be:

• Personal growth
• Stronger families
• United communities
• An environment of equality, respect and acceptance
History

• Founded by Eunice Kennedy Shriver in 1968

• First International Games held in July 1968 at Soldier Field in Chicago with 1,000 athletes with intellectual disabilities from 26 U.S. states and Canada competing in athletics, floor hockey and aquatics.

• In 1971 Special Olympics was given official approval to use the name “Olympics” by the IOC; one of only three global organizations (along with Junior Olympics and Paralympics).

• Now, there are more than 5,695,000 Special Olympics athletes and Unified Sports teammates in 172 countries.
How Special Olympics is Unique

Special Olympics is more similar than different from other sports organizations. However, there are five areas that make Special Olympics unique.

1) Does not charge a fee to athletes or their families to train or compete

2) Offers sports opportunities for athletes of all ability levels

3) Groups athletes based on ability for equitable competition; a process called divisioning. Age and gender are also considered for divisioning.

4) All participants receive an award for their efforts

5) Advancement to higher levels of competition is a random based on order of finish for each division
What type of volunteer are you?

Class A Volunteers

Class A volunteers are anyone who...

• has direct contact with athletes, or

• is in a position of authority, supervision or trust of athletes, or

• handles substantial amounts of cash or assets of Special Olympics

Positions include coaches, chaperones, committee members, Unified Sports Partners, Games Management Team (GMT) members, etc.

Class B / Day of Event Volunteers

Class B or Day of Event volunteers assists with competition or special events

Positions include staging escorts, competition aide (i.e. scorekeeper) and awards presenters

Worldwide there are...

1,190,770 Volunteers
432,267 Coaches
To help ensure the safety of both athletes and volunteers, Special Olympics requires all Class A volunteers to participate in the Protective Behaviors online course. The course provides information intended to detect and prevent physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

**Requirements to be a Class A volunteers include:**

✔ Complete this **General Orientation**

✔ Submit and pass **background check**
  Forms available at [www.specialolympics.org](http://www.specialolympics.org)

✔ Complete the **Protective Behaviors** course [http://resources.specialolympics.org](http://resources.specialolympics.org)
Sports Offered...

Special Olympics currently offers 35 Olympic-type sports with competitions occurring at all levels throughout the year.

- Alpine Skiing
- Athletics
- Badminton
- Basketball
- Bocce
- Bowling
- Cricket
- Cross County Skiing
- Cycling
- Equestrian
- Figure Skating
- Floorball
- Floor Hockey
- Football
- Golf
- Gymnastics Artistic
- Gymnastics Rhythmic
- Handball
- Judo
- Kayaking
- MATP
- Netball
- Open Water Swimming
- Powerlifting
- Roller Skating
- Sailing
- Short Track Speed Skating
- Snowboarding
- Snowshoeing
- Softball
- Swimming
- Table Tennis
- Tennis
- Triathlon
- Volleyball

Worldwide in 2016 there were...

- 111,671 competitions
- 20,187 Unified Sports competitions
- 306 competitions/day
- 13 competitions/hour
Sports for All Ability Levels

• For athletes who are new to the sport, Special Olympics offers **Individual Skills Contest** for team sports which allows athletes to score points through skills stations.

• Non-competitive sport experiences:

  The **Motor Activities Training Program (MATP)** is designed for athletes with severe or profound intellectual disabilities who are unable to participate in official Special Olympics sport competitions because of their skill and/or functional abilities.

  The **Special Olympics Young Athletes Program**, an early childhood sports play program for children age 2 to seven years old, includes games, songs, and other fun physical activities to get future Special Olympics athletes moving and ready for sport training.
Unified Sports is recognized globally as a program for promoting social inclusion.

- Integrates individuals with and without intellectual disabilities (ID) on teams for sport training and competition.

- Includes approximately equal number of Special Olympics athletes and Unified partners without ID of similar ages and abilities on the playing field as teammates.

- All teammates are recognized as equal contributors.
Unified Champion Schools

Key Components of a Unified Champion School:

1) **Unified Sports training and competition** in elementary, middle and high schools

2) **Inclusive youth leadership** allowing students of all abilities to be leaders in their school

3) **Whole school engagement** activities to positively impact school climate
   - ✓ R-Word Campaign
   - ✓ Pep Rallies
   - ✓ Fans in the Stands

Click to watch Be A Game Changer video (1 min 47 sec)
Healthy Athletes

Healthy Athletes & Healthy Communities are designed to help Special Olympics athletes improve their health and fitness, to increase the athlete's ability to train and compete as well as enhance their well being.

**Health disciplines include:**

- Opening Eyes (vision)
- FUNfitness (physical therapy)
- Special Smiles (dental)
- Healthy Hearing (audiology)
- Health Promotion (well-being)
- Fit Feet (podiatry)
- MedFest (sports physical exam)
- Strong Minds (emotional wellness)
Athlete Leadership Program

Athlete Leadership empowers athletes to develop leadership skills and utilize their voices and abilities to undertake meaningful leadership roles, influence change in the Special Olympics movement and create inclusive communities worldwide.

Athletes can serve as an Athlete Leader in many roles such as:

- Global Messenger
- Board Member
- Committee Member
- Advocate
- Coach
- Official
- Special Olympics Staff Member

Worldwide there are...

40,814 athletes in volunteer leadership roles

4,842 athletes in volunteer staff roles
Putting it All Together

- **TRAINING** is the key
- **COMPETITION** is the means
- Skill, confidence, courage & joy are the **OUTCOMES**
- Better preparation for life is the **GOAL**
- Lifelong skills & increased independence are the **RESULTS**
Thank you!

Thank you for choosing to share your time and talents with the athletes of Special Olympics.