

# Special Olympics Connecticut

## General Orientation

***Special Olympics***  
*Connecticut*





# Welcome to General Orientation

## The goals of this orientation are to provide:

- The basic overview of Special Olympics and Special Olympics Connecticut
- The history and organizational structure of Special Olympics
- The initiatives, sports offerings and opportunities available to join and support the mission of Special Olympics

Special Olympics unleashes the transformative power and joy of sports to reveal the full potential of athletes with intellectual disabilities, creating more inclusive communities, everyday around the world.

*-- Preamble to the Special Olympics General Rules*

**Special Olympics**  
Connecticut



# PART I – THE MISSION, HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF SPECIAL OLYMPICS

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

-The Special Olympics Athlete Oath

***Special Olympics***  
*Connecticut*



# Mission Statement



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



# Components & Outcomes

Components	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Year-round</li><li>Training and Competition</li><li>Olympic-type Sports</li><li>Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Physical Fitness</li><li>Courage and Joy</li><li>Sharing of Gifts and Skills</li><li>Inclusion</li><li>Friendship<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Families</li><li>Athletes</li><li>Community</li></ul></li></ul>

# Founding Principles of Special Olympics



The principles on which Special Olympics was founded, and which must continue to guide the operation and expansion of the global Special Olympics Movement, include the following:

- People with intellectual disabilities can, with proper instruction and encouragement, enjoy, learn and benefit from participation in individual and team sports, adapted as necessary to meet the needs of those with special mental and physical limitations.
- Consistent training under the guidance of qualified coaches, with emphasis on physical conditioning, is essential to the development of sports skills, and competition among those of equal abilities is the most appropriate means of testing these skills, measuring progress and providing incentives for personal growth.
- Through sports training and competition: people with intellectual disabilities benefit physically, mentally, socially and spiritually; families are strengthened; and the community at large, both through participation and observation, is united with people with intellectual disabilities in an environment of equality, respect and acceptance.



## Founding Principles (cont.)

- Every person with an intellectual disability who meets the eligibility requirements set out in the General Rules should have the opportunity to participate in and benefit from the sports training and athletic competition programs offered by Special Olympics.
- Special Olympics must transcend all boundaries of race, gender, religion, national origin, geography, and political philosophy, and offer sports training and competition opportunities to all eligible persons with intellectual disabilities in accordance with uniform worldwide standards.
- Special Olympics celebrates and strives to promote the spirit of sportsmanship and a love of participation in sports for its own sake. To that end, Special Olympics aims to provide every athlete with an opportunity to participate in training and competition events which challenge that athlete to his or her fullest potential, regardless of the athlete's level of ability. Special Olympics therefore requires that Special Olympics Games and Tournaments offer sports and events which are appropriate for athletes of all levels of ability, and in the case of team sports, provide every athlete with an opportunity to play in every game.
- Special Olympics encourages sports training and competition opportunities at the local, area and community level (including schools) as a means of reaching the greatest number of eligible athletes.



# Special Olympics is unique from other sports organizations

## Special Olympics

- Sports for all ability levels
- Awards for all participants
- “Divisioning” for equitable competition
- Random drawing to national and international competitions

Special Olympics’ philosophy does not emphasize “winning at all costs,” but emphasizes the importance of participation, inclusion, effort and personal achievement.



# Special Olympics History

## **June 1962**

Eunice Kennedy Shriver begins a summer day camp at her home in Maryland for children with intellectual disabilities to realize their capabilities in sports and physical activities.

## **July 1968**

The first International Special Olympics Summer Games are held at Soldier Field in Chicago, Illinois, USA. 1000 individuals with intellectual disabilities from 26 states and Canada compete in track and field and swimming.

## **December 1971**

The U.S. Olympic Committee gives Special Olympics official approval to use the name 'Olympics' in the United States.

## **June 1981**

The Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics is launched in Wichita, Kansas, USA, after Police Chief Richard LaMunyon saw an urgent need to raise awareness for Special Olympics. The Torch Run is now Special Olympics' largest grassroots fundraiser, raising nearly \$40 million annually.

## **July 1988**

Special Olympics Unified Sports® is launched at the annual Special Olympics Conference in Reno, Nevada, and Lake Tahoe, California. Athletes with and without intellectual disabilities compete side-by-side in bowling, volleyball and softball.



## History (cont.)

### **July 1997**

Healthy Athletes® becomes an official Special Olympics initiative, providing health care services to Special Olympics athletes worldwide. The program includes free vision, hearing and dental screenings; injury prevention clinics and nutrition education.

### **July 2002**

The Nelson Mandela Children's Fund partners with Special Olympics to host an annual birthday celebration for its founder and chairperson, President of South Africa Nelson Mandela, and helps Special Olympics launch its Unified Sports® program in South Africa.

### **October 2007**

The city of Shanghai, China, hosts the 12th Special Olympics World Summer Games, which are broadcast internationally on an unprecedented scale. These Games, with more than 7,500 athletes from 164 countries participating, are a major milestone in Special Olympics' history.

### **August 2009**

Special Olympics mourns the loss of founder Eunice Kennedy Shriver who died surrounded by her family in Massachusetts. Letters and messages celebrating her contribution to humanity pour in from world leaders and everyday people around the world.



# History (cont.)

## **September 2010**

The first Eunice Kennedy Shriver Day is held in countries around the world to celebrate the vision of the founder of Special Olympics and to accelerate the momentum of the organization.

## **January 2011**

Special Olympics mourns the death of Sargent Shriver, husband of late founder Eunice Kennedy Shriver and Chairman of the Board Emeritus. Shriver served as president of the Movement from 1984 through 1996 and served as Chairman of the Board of Directors from 1990 to 2003.

## **June-July 2011**

The 2011 Special Olympics World Summer Games are held in Athens, Greece. 7,000 athletes from around the world gather to compete in the birthplace of the Olympics—demonstrating to the world just how far Special Olympics has come.

## **May 2012**

Special Olympics' global reach hits a new milestone, with more than 4 million athletes participating in programs around the world.



# History (cont.)

## January 2013

Opening of the first Special Olympics Global Development Summit. The event brings together government officials, human rights activists, as well as leaders from the sports and business worlds to explore ways to "End the Cycle of Poverty and Exclusion for People with Intellectual Disabilities."

## February 2013

Healthy Athletes breaks a new record at the World Winter Games in PyeongChang: more athletes receive free health screenings in a single day during the 2013 games than at any other time in the history of the Healthy Athletes program: 2,569 screenings were provided on 1 February alone.

## May 2014

Special Olympics' global reach expands to 4.4 million athletes around the world. Census numbers also show that as many as 80,000 events and competitions are held annually.

## 2014 World-Wide Report:

4,500,000 Athletes Served

94,000 Overall Competitions/258 Every day

1,400,000 Volunteers

221 Accredited Programs

170 Countries

# RELATIONSHIP WITH THE INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE



Through a Protocol of Agreement signed on February 15, 1988, the International Olympic Committee (the "IOC") officially recognized SOI and agreed to cooperate with SOI as a representative of the interests of athletes with intellectual disabilities. The IOC's formal recognition of SOI carries with it a solemn duty and responsibility, which must be discharged by SOI and all of its Accredited Programs, to conduct Special Olympics training and competition in accordance with the highest ideals of the international Olympic movement, to guard and protect the use of the term "Special Olympics," and to protect the word "Olympics" from unauthorized use or exploitation. The IOC's Protocol of Agreement with SOI prohibits SOI, Programs and GOCs from using the 5 ring Olympic logo, the Olympic anthem, or the Olympics motto. Each Accredited Program agrees to fulfill these responsibilities by accepting accreditation from SOI, as provided in its Accreditation License and Article 5 of the General Rules.



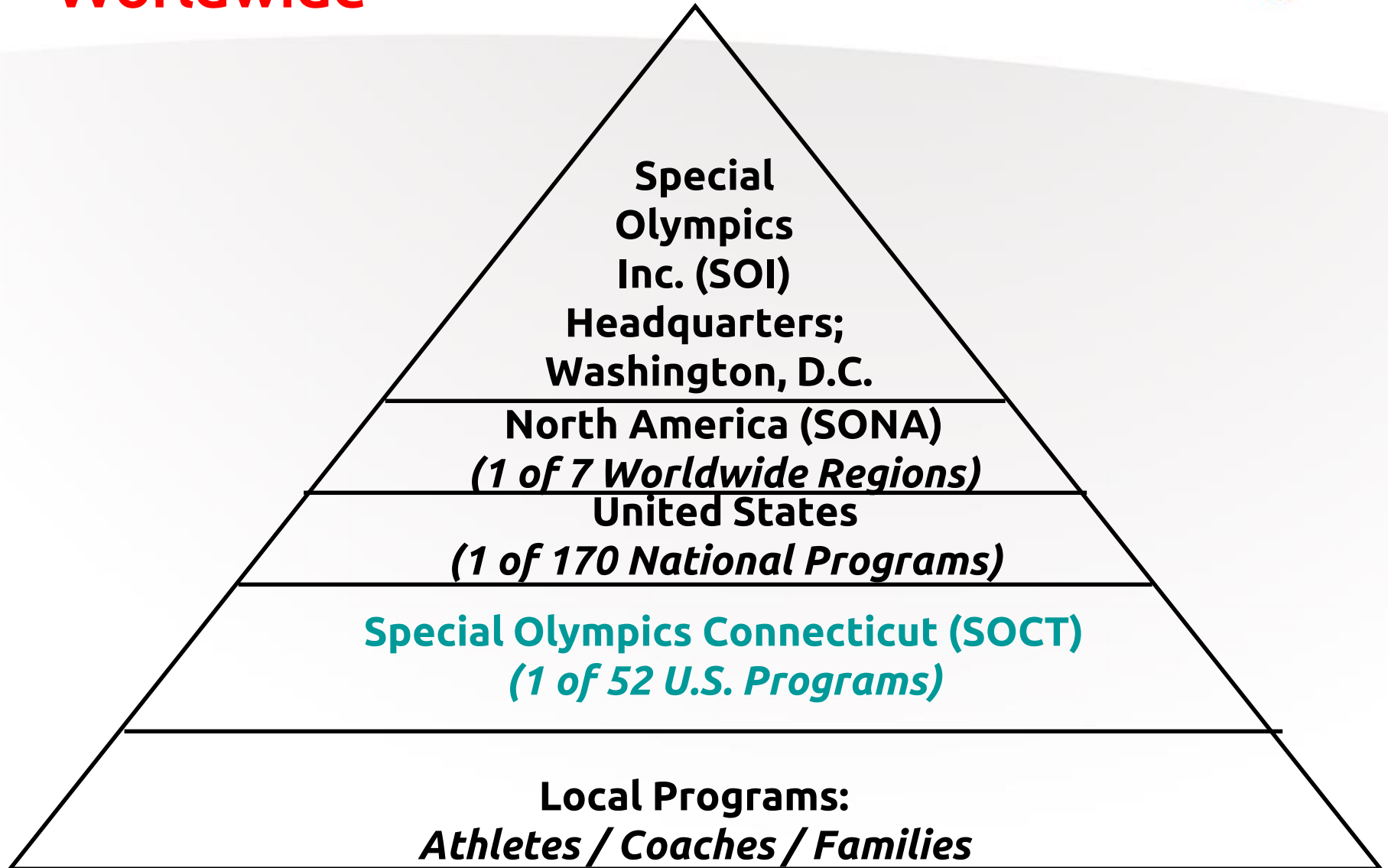
# SOI - Special Olympics Inc.

SOI is the international governing body of the Special Olympics Movement, founded by Eunice Kennedy Shriver.

In discharging its responsibilities as the world governing body of Special Olympics, SOI establishes and enforces all official policies and requirements of Special Olympics, oversees the conduct and expansion of Special Olympics accredited programs throughout the world, and provides training, technical assistance and other support to Accredited Programs and GOCs.

SOI is a not-for-profit corporation organized under the laws of the District of Columbia, USA, with its principal office in Washington, D.C., USA.

# Organizational Structure – Worldwide



# Organizational Structure - Statewide



**SOCT  
Board of Directors**

**SOCT Staff  
Headquarters in Hamden, CT**

**2666 State Street, Suite 1  
Hamden, CT 06517**

**72 (+/-) Local Programs:  
*Athletes / Coaches / Families***



# Local Programs

Special Olympics Connecticut accredits qualified local programs throughout the state to operate Special Olympics training and competition programs. Local programs register their athletes with SOCT, provide coaches and training and bring athletes and teams to competitions.

SOCT Local Programs may be run through a community parks and recreation, through an agency, as a public or private school, or may be a group of one or more athletes and coaches that have organized together under the policies and procedures of SOCT to participate in Special Olympics programming. Local Programs work closely with the SOCT staff in their section.



# Facts & Figures

- Sport seasons: 4
- Sports offered: 27
- **Athletes: 6,457**
- **Unified Partners: 7,036**
- **Volunteers: 9,000+**
- **Coaches: 500+**
- **Staff: 32**

**Special Olympics**  
Connecticut



# Part II – Special Olympics

## Athletes, Sports & Programs

***Special Olympics***  
*Connecticut*





# Eligibility for Participation in Special Olympics

Every person with an intellectual disability who is at least eight years of age is eligible to compete in Special Olympics. There is no maximum age limitation for participation in Special Olympics. The minimum age requirement for participation in Special Olympics competition is eight years of age.

The **Young Athletes** program introduces children, two to seven years old to the world of sports, with the goal of preparing them for Special Olympics sports training and competition. Children who are at least six years old may participate in age-appropriate training programs. No child may participate in a Special Olympics competition (or be awarded medals or ribbons associated with competition) before his or her eighth birthday.

# Identifying Persons with Intellectual disabilities



A person is considered to have an intellectual disability for purposes of determining his or her eligibility to participate in Special Olympics if that person satisfies any one of the following requirements:

- The person has been identified by an agency or professional as having an intellectual disability as determined by their localities;
- or the person has a cognitive delay, as determined by standardized measures such as intelligent quotient or "IQ" testing;
- or the person has a closely related developmental disability. A "closely related developmental disability" means having functional limitations in both general learning (such as IQ) and in adaptive skills (such as in recreation, work, independent living, self-direction, or self-care).

However, persons whose functional limitations are based solely on a physical, behavioral, or emotional disability, or a specific learning or sensory disability, are not eligible to participate as Special Olympics athletes, but may be eligible to be a Unified Sports® Partner or to volunteer for Special Olympics.

# Athlete-centered Coaching Guide



As athletes we hope that coaches will be dedicated to the team and committed to learning about each athlete's strengths, weaknesses and different personalities. We want coaches to:

- Put athletes in a position to be successful, while at the same time challenging us to improve by showing us what we need to develop.
- Teach us teamwork and unselfish play, but remember "safety first".
- Be open to change, because a drill may work for some of the team, but not for all of the team.
- Know the rules of the sport with regard to both the sport-specific governing body and the Special Olympics standards.
- And, lastly, we want coaches to remember our Special Olympics athlete oath:

**"Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me brave in the attempt."**

# Real Sport Experience

SOCT offers training and competition opportunities in 27 sports. Each sport season requires a minimum of eight weeks of training prior to competing in a state tournament.

***Special Olympics***  
*Connecticut*



# SOCT Sports and Seasons



## Summer Games

Athletics  
Cycling  
Soccer  
Swimming  
Tennis  
Triathlon

## Unified Sports Fall Festival

Bocce  
Croquet  
Golf  
Long-Distance  
Unified Running  
Sailing  
Softball

## Winter Games

Alpine Skiing  
Cross-Country Skiing  
Curling  
Figure Skating  
Floor Hockey  
Gymnastics  
Snowboarding  
Snowshoeing  
Speed Skating

## Unified Sports Holiday Classic

Basketball  
Bowling  
Cheerleading  
Flag Football  
Powerlifting  
Volleyball

# Sports for all ability levels



## Motor Activities Training Program (MATP)

Designed for individuals with severe disabilities that cannot benefit from standard Special Olympics training and competition programs.

### Range of Events in Track & Field

- Wheelchair Events
- Assisted Walking
- Walking
- Developmental Runs
- Sprints and Runs – 100m thru Marathon
- Throwing events – Tennis ball, softball, shot put, turbo java
- Pentathlon

### Range of Events in Basketball

- Basketball Skills
- Unified Sports® Recreational
- Unified Sports® Player Development
- Unified Sports® Competitive
- Traditional

# Sports Rules



Special Olympics Sports rules are:

- Based on National Governing Body or International Federation official rules.
- The rules contain few modifications for Special Olympics and are approved by the Special Olympics Sports Rules Committee
- The same rules govern all Special Olympics competitions throughout Connecticut, the United States and throughout the world – from local competitions to S.O. World Games

**Coaches, officials and volunteers show respect to and help the athletes to do their best, improve their sport skill and honor their efforts by calling the rules of the sport and violations as written.**

# Divisioning for Athletes



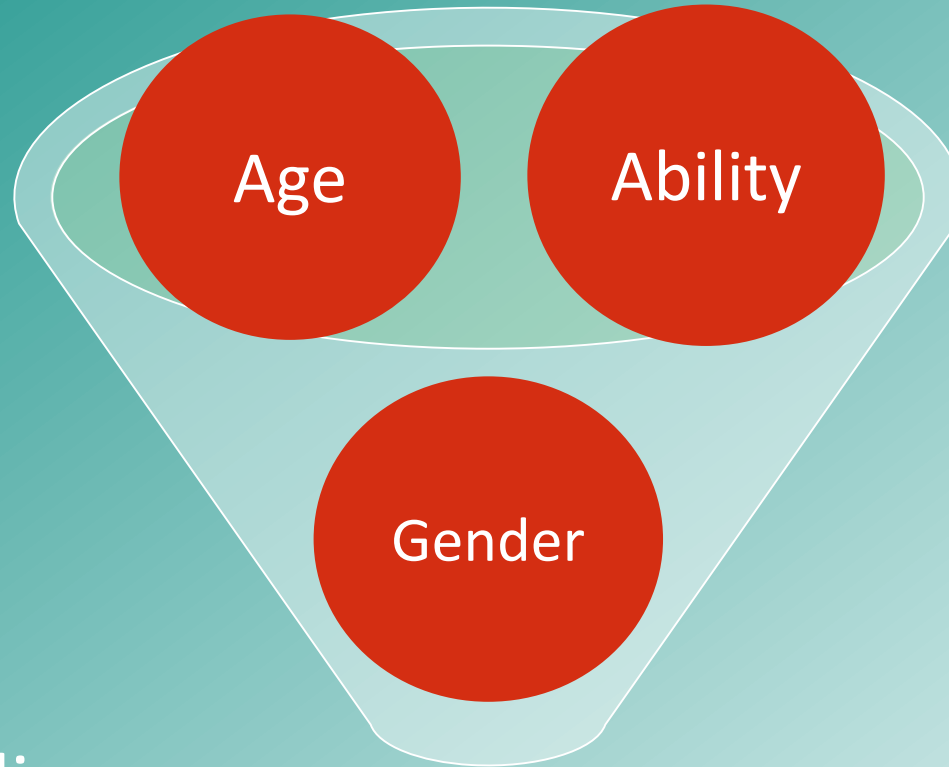
To ensure fair and equitable competition, to provide each athlete an opportunity to excel, and as a tool for motivating each athlete to do their personal best, Special Olympics uses a unique process called “divisioning”. Divisioning places athletes of similar gender, age and ability together to compete against one and other.

Divisions are ideally comprised of 3 – 8 athletes; are of the same gender and within the same age range. An athlete’s ability is the primary factor in divisioning for competitions. A 15% guideline is used to determine similar ability. The variance between the fastest and the slowest competitors in a division should be no more than 15%; thereby giving all competitors a reasonable opportunity to compete with one and other.

For example: an athlete that runs the 100m dash consistently in 20 seconds would run in a division that the fastest competitor would run no faster than 17 seconds motivating each athlete to do their best. (If an athlete that consistently ran a 30 second 100m and they were lined up to race a competitor that ran a 12 second 100m – they probably wouldn’t feel motivated to do their best for the entire race.

The “Honest Effort” rule states that an athlete may be sanctioned for obtaining a time/distant greater than 15% at a State Tournament.

# Divisioning Review



15% Guideline

Division

# Divisioning for Teams



**Similar to divisioning for individual athletes, divisioning for teams helps to ensure fair and equitable competition, provide each team an opportunity to excel and is a tool for motivating each team to do their best.**

**Team divisions are ideally comprised of 3 – 8 teams; are of the same gender and within the same age range. The teams ability level is also the primary factor in divisioning for competitions.**

**To determine a Team's ability level, teams are required to submit team and player assessment forms. Teams are also required to attend an Assessment Round tournament prior to the State Tournament.**

**The information from the assessment forms, the results and observations from the Assessment Round, along with past results and input from coaches and officials are all taken into account to place teams of similar ability together for state tournaments.**

# Unified Sports®



Special Olympics Unified Sports® began in Massachusetts in the early 1980's. It is recognized globally as an iconic program for social inclusion which activates attitude change and community building through an inclusive sport experience between individuals with and without intellectual disabilities, while broadening the relevance and impact of the Special Olympics movement.



# Unified Sports (cont.)



- An inclusive model sport program
- Approximately equal numbers of S.O. athletes and partners without intellectual disabilities as teammates for training and competition
- Athletes & partners: similar age and ability (ideal)
- 3 Models
  - Unified Sports® Competitive – Athletes and Partners are Teammates in competitive play
  - Unified Sports® Player Development – Teammates of lower ability not ready for competitive play are mentored by teammates of higher ability
  - Unified Sports® Recreational – An introduction to Unified Sports®



# Sustaining Athlete Health



## The Healthy Athletes Initiative

Since officially launching in 1997 as a Special Olympics program started by Dr. Steve Perlman, a pediatric dentist from Lynn, Massachusetts, Healthy Athletes has grown to provide seven different health screenings — Fit Feet, FUNfitness, Healthy Hearing, Health Promotion, Opening Eyes®, MedFest and Special Smiles® — with the goal to improve athletes' ability to train and compete. These free health screenings have been implemented globally in more than 90 countries, and nearly 500,000 screenings have been completed since its inception.

### **The key objectives of Special Olympics Healthy Athletes Initiative are:**

- Improve access and health care for Special Olympics athletes at event-based health screenings.
- Make referrals to local health practitioners when appropriate.
- Train health care professionals and students in the health professions about the needs and care of people with intellectual disabilities.
- Collect, analyze and disseminate data on the health status and needs of people with intellectual disabilities.
- Advocate for improved health policies and programs for person with intellectual disabilities.

**SOCT conducts Healthy Athletes screenings at the annual Winter Games, Summer Games and Senior Sports Classic.**

# Athlete Leadership Programs (ALPs)



**Athlete Leadership Programs (ALPs)** allow athletes to explore opportunities for Special Olympics participation in roles previously considered “non-traditional.” Such participation might come in the form of an athlete serving on the Board of Directors or local organizing committee; or it might find an athlete as a spokesperson, member of an Athlete Input Council, a team captain, coach or official.

## **Special Olympics Connecticut offers the following Athlete Leadership Programs:**

- Public Speaking (Global Messengers)
- Athletes on Boards, Committees or Input Councils
- Athletes as Volunteers (games or events)
- Athletes as Coaches or Assistant Coaches
- Athletes as Sport Officials
- Assisting with Fund Raising
- Assisting with technology or other office work
- Serving as peer mentors or team captains

**Special Olympics**  
Connecticut





## Get involved- be a Coach!

- Work with a team or individuals during their 8 week training period for approximately 2 hours per week
- Attend tournaments, either one day or overnight, and support the athletes both during competition and throughout the event.
- SOCT offers both sports specific training and training on working with Special Olympics athletes
- All coaches must submit a Class A Volunteer Registration form. A CORI and national background check are run on all coaches and assistant coaches.

**Become a coach and inspire greatness so that SOCT athletes can reach their full potential-on and off the playing field!**