

ELIGIBILITY TO PARTICIPATE

General Statement of Eligibility

Special Olympics training and competition is open to every person with intellectual disabilities who is at least eight years of age and who registers to participate in Special Olympics as required by the Special Olympics Incorporated General Rules. Please see the Coach Handbook for clarification of eligibility for Unified Sports Partners.

Age Requirements

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. Special Olympics Colorado permits and encourages children who are at least six years old to participate in age-appropriate Special Olympics training programs offered by Local Programs or in specific (and age-appropriate) cultural or social activities offered during the course of a Special Olympics event. Such events must be participation only and conducted in a manner that does not recognize place finishes and encourages the spirit of participation. Such children may be recognized for their participation in training or other non-competition activities through certificates of participation, the use of the participation ribbons, or through other types of recognition approved by Special Olympics Incorporated. The place finish awards cannot be used. No child may participate in Special Olympics competition (or be awarded medals or ribbons associated with competition) before his or her eighth birthday.

Degree of Disability

Participation in Special Olympics training and competition is open to all persons with intellectual disabilities who meet the age requirement regardless of the level or degree of that person's disability, and whether or not that person also has other mental or physical disabilities, so long as that person registers to participate in Special Olympics as required by the Special Olympics Incorporated General Rules.

Identifying Persons with Intellectual disabilities

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

1. The person has been identified by an agency or professional as having intellectual disabilities as determined by their localities **OR**
2. The person has a cognitive delay, as determined by standardized measures such as intelligent quotient or "IQ" testing or other measures which are generally accepted within the professional community in that Chapter's nation as being a reliable measurement of the existence of a cognitive delay **OR**
3. The person has a closely related developmental disability. A "closely related developmental disability" means having functional limitations in either general learning 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 volunteer for Special Olympics as partners in Unified Sports, if they otherwise meet the separate eligibility requirements for participation in Unified Sports which are set forth in the Special Olympics Incorporated Unified Sports Handbook.

Preserving Flexibility in Identifying Eligible Athletes

The state may request limited permission from Special Olympics Incorporated to depart from the eligibility requirements identified in the section *Identifying Persons with Intellectual Disabilities*, above, if the Chapter believes that there are exceptional circumstances which warrant such a departure, and so notifies Special Olympics Incorporated in writing. Special Olympics Incorporated will consider such requests promptly, but shall have the final authority in determining whether any departure or exception is appropriate.

Unified Sports

Special Olympics Unified Sports competition involves athletes (individuals with intellectual disabilities) and partners (individuals without intellectual disabilities) competing together. Eligible athletes must meet the criteria previously described in this section. Special Olympics Unified Sports training and competition is open to any partner who is at least eight years of age and who registers to participate in Special Olympics as required by the Special Olympics Incorporated General Rules. To be a Unified Partner requires completion of the Unified Sports Partner Application for Participation, completion of the Special Olympics Colorado Class A Volunteer Form, and meet the separate eligibility requirements for participation set forth in the Special Olympics Incorporated Unified Sports Handbook.

CHSSA Eligibility

Special Olympics Colorado Unified Sports is recognized as “contributor status” and is therefore not governed by the policies and procedures of CHSSA. Each individual school has its own policy regarding Special Olympics Unified Sports Eligibility. Please see your schools’ athletic department policies regarding this.

Young Athletes Program

The Young Athletes program is an innovative sports play program for children ages 2-7 with intellectual disabilities and their peers, designed to introduce them into the world of sports. The benefits to this program have been proven worldwide. First and foremost, these activities will help the children improve physically, cognitively and socially. This program will also raise awareness of the Special Olympics program and serve as an introduction to the resources and support available within Special Olympics Colorado.

This program is designed to address two specific levels of play. Level 1 includes physical activities focused on developing fundamental motor tracking and eye-hand coordination. Level 2 concentrates on the application of these physical activities through a sports skills activity program and developing skills consistent with Special Olympics sports play. The activities will consist of foundational skills, walking & running, balance & jumping, trapping & catching, throwing, striking, kicking and advanced skills.