

## **Eligibility to Participate in Special Olympics**

Special Olympics training and competition is open to every person who:

1. Is at least eight years of age,
2. Has registered to participate in Special Olympics by completing an Official Special Olympics Release Form and Application Form.
3. Is identified by an agency or professional as having:
  - an intellectual disability (mental retardation), or
  - a cognitive delay, as determined by standardized measures, or
  - a closely related developmental disability, which means having functional limitations in both general learning and in adaptive skills (such as in recreation, work, independent living, self-direction, or self-care).

Persons whose functional limitations are based solely on physical, behavioral, emotional, specific learning or sensory disability are not eligible to participate as Special Olympics athletes. However, *these individuals may be eligible to participate as Special Olympics Unified Sports® Partners.*

Participation in Special Olympics training and competition is open to all persons with an intellectual disability, a cognitive delay or a closely related developmental disability who meet the age requirements *regardless of how mild or severe the person's disability, and whether or not that person also has other mental or physical disabilities.*

Children 2 - 7 years of age may participate in Special Olympics Young Athletes program. Young Athletes is an innovative sports play program that consists of a series of developmentally appropriate activities designed specifically for young children. The program seeks to strengthen physical development and self-esteem for children by building skills for future sports participation and socialization prior to Special Olympics competition eligibility. Young Athletes participants may not participate in Special Olympics competition or be awarded medals or ribbons associated with competition. Young Athletes participants may be recognized for their participation through certificates or ribbons of participation.

There is no maximum age for participation in Special Olympics.

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