



**What is Special Olympics Utah?** Special Olympics Utah is a chapter of Special Olympics International. The Utah Chapter was established in 1971 and is a registered 501(C)(3) non-profit Utah corporation, operated by Utahns for Utah's citizens with intellectual disabilities.

**What is the mission of Special Olympics?** 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, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts and skills with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

**What is an intellectual disability?** An individual has an intellectual disability when three criteria are met: (1) IQ is below 70-75, (2) There are significant limitations in two or more adaptive areas (skills that are needed to live, work, and play in the community, such as communication or self-care), and (3) The condition manifests itself before the age of 18.<sup>1</sup> An intellectual disability is the most common developmental disability and includes Autism Spectrum Disorders, Fragile X Syndrome, Down Syndrome, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Apert Syndrome, Williams Syndrome, Prader-Willi, Phenylketonuria (PKU), Cerebral Palsy and a severe head injury, infection or stroke if manifested before the age of 18.

**Why are sports the focus of Special Olympics?** Sports are transformative. Participation in sports shifts the focus to what a Special Olympics athlete can do. Through sports training and competition, individuals with intellectual disabilities develop motor and communication skills, discover new strengths and abilities, and experience the joy and satisfaction of meeting a goal, all of which leads to greater confidence. As athletes engage and participate with others they become part of our community. By developing greater confidence and interactive skills, many athletes go on to hold jobs or volunteer positions. Witnessing these successes encourages others to consider the potential of those with intellectual disabilities.

**What sports programs does Special Olympics Utah offer?** Utah currently offers summer and fall sports training and competition. The summer sports are track and field ("athletics"), soccer and softball and the fall sports are aquatics, basketball, bocce and golf. Also offered are Unified Sports® in athletics and soccer where individuals with and without intellectual disabilities with similar age and ability, train and compete on the same team at participating high schools. The Young Athletes™ program helps children age two to seven gain motor skills and strength, while the Motor Activities Training Program helps those eight and older who continue to need skill and strength development before competing in traditional sports offerings.

**Who is eligible to participate in Special Olympics?** An individual must be at least eight years old and identified by an agency or professional as having one of the following conditions: intellectual disabilities, cognitive delays as measured by formal assessment, or significant learning or vocational problems due to cognitive delay that require or have required specially designed instruction. The Young Athletes™ program serves children age two to seven with intellectual disabilities.

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<sup>1</sup>American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

## About Special Olympics Utah



**How many are currently served by Special Olympics Utah?** On average, 1,700 individuals with intellectual disabilities, and approximately 250 individuals without intellectual disabilities through Unified Sports®, participate annually across Utah. Athletes can start at age two with Young Athletes, and begin competition at age eight. There is no upper age limit; the majority of athletes are ages 21 to 39, and the current oldest athlete is 90!

**How many individuals could be served by Special Olympics Utah?** It is estimated that one to three percent of the global population has an intellectual disability. Even one percent of Utah's estimated population of 2,971,700 as of January 1, 2015 would indicate 29,717 individuals could be eligible for and benefit from Special Olympics Utah programs. It is a goal of Special Olympics Utah to broaden its reach and serve more eligible individuals.

**How are the Sports Program services delivered?** The strength of Special Olympics is its volunteer coaches and assistant coaches. Utah has over 500 volunteer coaches ranging from a parent coaching one child, a group home with a staff member serving as the coach, a coach or coaches associated with a school based program, or a community team with a head coach and many assistant coaches. Special Olympics Utah has full-time and part-time staff that run the day-to-day operations and develops and administers the sports programming and training for both participants and coaches.

**Are there other programs Special Olympics Utah provides?** During state-level competitions, athletes and partners participate in Healthy Athletes clinics in a variety of disciplines to help ensure they are at their best on and off the field. Volunteer clinicians conduct exams for Opening Eyes, Special Smiles, Healthy Hearing, Fun Fitness, Health Promotions and Fit Feet annually. Eligible athletes in need also receive free eyeglasses, shoe inserts and referrals to other medical professionals as necessary.

**Where do volunteers help?** Volunteers serve as trained coaches, assistant coaches, unified sports partners, healthy athletes' clinicians, and assist with fundraising and special events. Volunteers contribute over 300,000 volunteer hours annually at area and state competitions.

**What makes Special Olympics Utah unique from other local sports programs?** (1) Its focus is to assist individuals with intellectual disabilities, (2) athletes compete at no cost including Unified Sports® partners, (3) there are programs for athletes of all skill levels, (4) competitions are structured so that athletes compete with other athletes of similar ability in equitable divisions, and (5) there are components to promote healthy athletes and to change attitudes to encourage inclusion, respect and understanding of those with intellectual disabilities.



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