



Special Olympics



Healthy Athletes®

VOLUNTEERING

People with intellectual disabilities have more specialized health needs and greater health issues and difficulty accessing health care services than the general public. Special Olympics has been a leader in documenting the need for better, more accessible health care among its athletes around the world. Several U.S. Surgeons General, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and several professional organizations have issued calls for action to improve the health and well-being of people with intellectual disabilities.

Volunteer health care providers can do something about these issues. Volunteers are the backbone of the Special Olympics movement. When you volunteer, you join an international family of people who have gained a greater understanding of and appreciation for people with intellectual disabilities. The Special Olympics movement can ultimately transform and inspire people and communities to open their minds, accept and include people with intellectual disabilities and celebrate the value of all people.

JOIN THE PROVIDER DIRECTORY

The Special Olympics Provider Directory is designed to provide an easy-to-use means for people with intellectual disabilities and their families to find a health care professional in their area.

Physical therapists can enroll in this online database which is expected to be the largest list of health care providers for people with intellectual disabilities in the United States, Mexico, Canada and the Caribbean; over time, the Provider Directory will list providers in other regions of the world.

Joining the Provider Directory is easy! Physical therapists can create and maintain a free listing by visiting www.specialolympics.org/providerdirectory. The resource is meant solely to facilitate the connection between a person with intellectual disabilities and a health care professional.

CLINICAL DIRECTORS

Each state and country with a Special Olympics Program has or will initiate one or several Healthy Athletes screening events across seven disciplines. To achieve this goal, Special Olympics seeks to recruit and train one or more physical therapy professionals to become the FUNfitness Clinical Director for their location.

FUNfitness Clinical Directors:

- recruit and train local volunteers;
- work with their Special Olympics Program to coordinate annual screening events;
- ensure accurate data collection;
- develop community-based referrals for athletes as needed; and
- assist with fundraising.

If you are interested in becoming a FUNfitness Clinical Director or Volunteer, please contact:

Special Olympics
1-800-700-8585
info@specialolympics.org
www.specialolympics.org

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Special Olympics



VOLUNTEER INFORMATION





HISTORY

Launched officially in 1997, Healthy Athletes® provides free health screenings and services to athletes at local, state/provincial, national and World Games.

Comprising seven unique disciplines, the program goal is to improve training and competition by focusing on the overall health and fitness of Special Olympics athletes through basic health screenings, educational information, and referrals for follow-up care as needed.

The seven disciplines are:

- Fit Feet (podiatry)
- FUNfitness (physical therapy)
- Health Promotion (nutrition, hydration, bone health, smoking cessation, sun safety)
- Healthy Hearing (audiology)
- MedFest® (sports physicals and general check-ups)
- Special Olympics-Lions Clubs International Opening Eyes® (vision)
- Special Smiles® (dental)

Nearly 500,000 screenings have been completed around the world since program inception and more than 62,000 health professionals and volunteers have received training for working with patients with intellectual disabilities. This training helps health professionals increase their knowledge, comfort level and competence in working with patients with intellectual disabilities and enables them to bring these skills back to their communities.

FUNfitness was developed in collaboration with the American Physical Therapy Association and premiered at the 2001 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Alaska, USA. Since then, FUNfitness screening events have been hosted in more than 85 locations, screening more than 25,000 athletes.

PURPOSE

Special Olympics athletes receive a variety of screenings and services in a welcoming and fun atmosphere.

FUNfitness aims to:

- screen for flexibility, functional strength, balance and aerobic condition;
- educate athletes, families and coaches about how to improve function and performance; and
- provide a hands-on opportunity for athletes to learn about physical therapy and its role in fitness.

All athletes receive educational resources at each screening, including an "Athlete Scorecard" tailored to improve flexibility, strength, balance and aerobic fitness for each individual screened.

PARTICIPATION

Special Olympics athletes participate in a variety of seasonal sports, but not necessarily in a year-round fitness program. Poor flexibility, strength, balance or aerobic condition can negatively impact performance. Screening data suggest that athletes need to improve these key fitness areas.

During FUNfitness events, physical therapists, assisted by physical therapist assistants and students:

- screen Special Olympics athletes on
 - flexibility of hamstring, calf, shoulder rotator and hip flexor muscles;
 - functional strength of the abdominal, upper and lower extremity muscles;
 - static and dynamic balance;
 - aerobic condition;
- provide one-on-one education to athletes, families and coaches; and
- make recommendations for risk prevention and optimal function in training and competition.