

Special Olympics Healthy Athletes®



Special Olympics Healthy Communities

Special Olympics Healthy Communities across the world have been created to reduce health disparities and increase health status of people with intellectual disabilities (ID). Healthy Communities are being piloted in the following 14 Special Olympics Programs over three years: Peru, Mexico, South Africa, Malawi, Romania, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Thailand, and 6 states in the U.S. (Wisconsin, Arizona, Kansas, New York, New Jersey, and Florida).

During the pilot phase of the Special Olympics Healthy Communities initiative, the 14 pilot Programs implemented a number of innovative models that contributed to improved health status and access to care for people with intellectual disabilities. To further expand the impact of these innovative models, starting in August 2014, “Expanding Health” grants will be provided to seven Special Olympics (SO) Programs to expand their health programming in one of four focus areas as follows:

- (1) Partnerships for Follow Up Care,
- (2) Partnerships for Wellness Opportunities,
- (3) Training of Health Care Providers, or
- (4) Athlete Health Advocates

Special Olympics Arkansas

SO Arkansas is developing partnerships for wellness opportunities through the state by engaging more families and athletes in fitness and wellness opportunities within Special Olympics and the community. This will include launching a state-wide Fit Families Challenge that will utilize fitness software to track activity, progress towards goals as well as send health promotion messages. Additionally, SO Arkansas plans to target the athletes support network including coaches, families, athlete leaders, residential providers and healthcare providers to educate people with ID and their supporters on the importance of living a healthy lifestyle. This will be achieved by conducting onsite healthy education fairs at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, Arkansas Children’s Hospital, schools, and day centers throughout Arkansas. In conjunction with the health education programs, SO Arkansas is selecting an athlete leader to serve as a nutrition captain in each area.

Special Olympics Australia

Special Olympics Australia is developing collaborative partnerships with health organizations aligned with two Healthy Athletes disciplines (Health Promotion and FUNfitness) in an effort to develop preventative education materials and follow up health and wellness programs. SO Australia will work to further their partnership with Sports Dietitians Australia (SDA) to provide SOA athletes and their support network with nutritional information and tools to meet their requirements before, during and after competition, as well as provide education and awareness around appropriate sources of food for energy, performance and well-being.



Special Olympics Namibia

SO Namibia is working to increase awareness of health issues facing individuals with ID and improve the referral network for athletes needing follow up oral health treatment identified at Special Smiles examinations through the formation of a partnership with the Ministry of Health and Social Services. Access to care will be improved through training at least five dentists who will provide follow-up treatment for athletes at designated clinics located in one of four sub-regions (North, South, Central, West) throughout the country.

Special Olympics Pakistan

SO Pakistan is working to raise awareness about health issues and barriers facing Special Olympics athletes and people with ID throughout the country by educating families, health care providers and athletes. To accomplish this, SO Pakistan will hold family health forums in 10 cities and villages. They will also conduct a training program for 75 coaches in hygiene, health education, fitness, nutrition, injury prevention and hydration and train 25 athletes to become health ambassadors. Furthermore, SO Pakistan will work to build partnerships with, and conduct trainings for, local health care institutions (including Liaquat College of Medicine and Dentistry and Ibrahim Eye Hospital) who will then provide follow-up care as needed for 600 athletes attending upcoming Healthy Athletes examinations.

Special Olympics Paraguay

SO Paraguay is developing partnerships for follow up care by working with the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education to provide treatment to people with ID in special schools throughout the country. SO Paraguay will target three regions within the country to provide training for health practitioners. This will be followed by Health Days in each region where health examinations will be carried out and follow up care will be organized for individuals needing treatment. The events will also provide health education for Special Olympics athletes, others with ID and their families.

Special Olympics Poland

SO Poland is improving access to for follow up care for people with ID by partnering with five medical centers and establishing a database of willing providers. Partnerships will be established to ensure that the centers provide health care for people with ID and serve as a place in which people with ID can be referred for care. SO Poland is also raising awareness by training health care professionals, students, family members and others about needs and care of people with intellectual disabilities through conferences, meetings and distribution of newsletters.

Special Olympics Rhode Island

SO Rhode Island is working to create a network of trained and educated athlete health advocates throughout the state and to assist in infusing health through sport. The athletes will be trained through seminars and activities throughout the year and as a result will independently promote wellness, nutrition, sun safety, hydration and illness prevention amongst their peers at various regional and state games. Throughout the year, the athlete health leaders will be on hand at competitions distributing hand sanitizer, sunscreen and health promotion messages to thousands of athletes.

Special Olympics Uganda

SO Uganda is working to increase malaria awareness and prevention and proper hygiene among their athletes and families. To accomplish this they will create partnerships to conduct education sessions on malaria prevention including the distribution of bed nets. They will also provide access to testing and treatment for those suspected of having malaria. To maximize effectiveness and sustainability, SO Uganda will carry out home visits to ensure that the bed net usage and hygiene best practices are being followed correctly.