

TRAIN Executive Summary

Background

TRAIN (Testing Recreational Activities and Improving Nutrition) is an assessment program formally known as FIT (Fitness Improvement Training). This health assessment and educational program is designed to assess Special Olympics athletes' sports skills and provide them with nutritional information.

Methodology

TRAIN is a program developed by Special Olympics to track and improve athlete health and quality of life. TRAIN is designed to be set up at a Special Olympics event, but is also suitable for use in a school or group setting.

Athletes go through a series of nutrition and sports skills stations. The nutrition stations are educational, focusing on the concept of a balanced plate. Athletes interactively learn about the different food groups, the functions of the food groups, and practice making balanced plates. The sports skill stations test seven basic sports skills: aerobic endurance, balance, coordination, flexibility, power, strength, and speed/agility. The station results will be used to help each athlete discover their strongest skills, skills for them to improve, and additional Special Olympics sports to try.

TRAIN offers two sets of supplementary material: TRAIN @ Home and TRAIN @ School. These offer athletes resources to learn about nutrition and exercise away from a Special Olympics setting.

TRAIN @ Home provides athletes and their families with easy-to-understand information on proper exercise and nutrition habits. A nutrition booklet contains an overview of healthy nutrition, sample menus, grocery store lists, healthy snacking, and other nutritional resources. An exercise booklet includes an overview of healthy exercise, stretching information, fitness outlines, and activities for the seven sports skills. At the conclusion of a TRAIN assessment, athletes will receive these books to take home with them.

TRAIN @ School consists of a series of lesson plans designed to complement and expand on the TRAIN assessment. The lesson plans are aimed towards elementary school students with intellectual disabilities, but can be used and modified for any classroom environment. The nutrition lessons cover topics such as: food groups, the importance of a balanced meal, healthy snacking, and the role of water in the body. An adaptive PE lesson is given for each of the seven sports skills; each lesson gives students information about the skill along with activities to both reinforce the information and practice the skill itself.