

✓ Sibling Relationships: ✓ Athlete Leader Perspectives

Results and Recommendations

This research project sought to explore the sibling relationship between Special Olympics athlete leaders and their siblings without intellectual disabilities (ID) as part of Special Olympics' Sibling Engagement Initiative. Surveys and interviews were conducted with athlete leaders to inform recommendations for Special Olympics' programs and services.

Results

Sibling Connections

- Athlete leaders have strong, positive relationships with their siblings
- Many siblings of athlete leaders advocate for inclusion in the community
- Many siblings of athlete leaders are regularly involved in Special Olympics
- 93% of athlete leaders surveyed report that Special Olympics has been for them and their siblings

"Sometimes I stand up for my sister. If someone bothers her, I cannot let it happen because we are siblings. She loves me and I love her so there is a connection."

Community Challenges

- The biggest challenge athlete leaders and their siblings face are negative attitudes towards disability in the community
- Siblings of athlete leaders often advocate for their sibling when faced with stigma or discrimination in the community
- Some siblings experience disability by association, which describes when someone experiences discrimination due to their connection to a person with a disability

"I would say... the names that they use when they want to tease you... That's when most of my siblings would try and stop them."

Supports and Services

- Athlete leaders and their siblings expressed interest in developing Special Olympics programming that allowed for siblings to connect with one another, including an international sibling network and support groups
- Athlete leaders and their siblings also expressed interest in educational programming in which siblings and their families could learn more about ID and go on to educate their communities

"[Special Olympics] can create a space, get siblings, and give them time to speak about what they experience."

Recommendations

- 1 Conduct sibling research on a larger scale.
- 2 Future research projects should be inclusive.
- 3 Establish an international sibling network.
- 4 Consider launching sibling support groups.
- 5 Consider launching sibling education programs.
- 6 Create sibling resources addressing areas of need.