



## Opening Eyes

The Special Olympics Lions Clubs International Opening Eyes® program is changing lives in communities across the globe, providing free eye assessments, prescription eyewear, sunglasses and sports goggles to people with intellectual disabilities. At the end of the 12-step visual exam, a decision is made if new glasses may be helpful. **Through the generosity of our corporate sponsors Essilor (lenses) and Safilo (frames), athletes choose from a selection of free eyewear.** Athletes who do not need any corrective lenses receive plano sunglasses provided by Safilo.

## Importance and Impact

Opening Eyes assessments have found that a large percentage of Special Olympics athletes have untreated eye problems.

- **23%** have never had an eye exam
- **16%** have an eye disease
- **36%** need new prescription glasses



## Purpose and Goals:

There are several ways that the Opening Eyes program helps increase athletes' access to care:

1. Providing vision assessments, refractions, and dispensing of appropriate eyewear to athletes during Special Olympics events.
2. Making permanent changes in the attitudes of the optometrists/eyecare practitioners and optometry students who volunteer to participate in the Opening Eyes vision assessments.
3. Educating athletes, their guardians, coaches and administrators about the importance of vision to the performance of athletes in sports, school and work.
4. Providing continuing education to our volunteer optometrists/eyecare practitioners in order to familiarize them with the best techniques for testing this patient population.
5. Collecting and analyzing screening data in order to raise awareness and to advocate for improved eye care for people with intellectual disabilities.

## CONTACT

**Bjoern Koehler:** Manager, Special Olympics  
Opening Eyes  
E-mail: [bkoehler@specialolympics.org](mailto:bkoehler@specialolympics.org)

**Dr. Sandra Block, Sandra Block, OD, M ED, MPH, FAAO, FCOVD, FNAP:** Global Clinical Advisor,  
Special Olympics Opening Eyes  
E-mail: [sblock@ico.edu](mailto:sblock@ico.edu)

**Stefan Schwarz, FAAO:** Global Clinical Advisor,  
Special Olympics Opening Eyes  
E-mail: [s.schwarz@optometrie-schwarz.de](mailto:s.schwarz@optometrie-schwarz.de)