



Purpose and Goals:

The goal of Strong Minds is to **encourage the development of active strategies for maintaining emotional wellness under stress** among Special Olympics athletes and people with IDD. This is achieved by:

- Starting conversations about stress, coping, emotional wellness, and mental health.
- Increasing athlete awareness of coping skills to handle stress.
- Helping athletes identify which skills they want to use in competition and in daily life.
- Providing resources on positive coping for athletes, coaches, and caregivers.
- Providing training experiences for mental health professionals and students to learn to discuss mental health and emotional wellbeing with individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Contact:

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Overview

Strong Minds (mental health) **provides an interactive learning activity focused on developing adaptive coping skills** for Special Olympics athletes and people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

Through Strong Minds, volunteer mental health professionals provide formal mental health screening tools, such as CORE-LD30 and WEMWBS-ID, to identify athletes who may be at risk for mental health concerns. The results of these screenings guide referral procedures to connect athletes with community-based healthcare professionals, as needed.

Facts and Impact:

Strong Minds screenings help detect potential mental health concerns. Research on individuals with IDD in the US shows:

51% of adults with IDD experience daily anxiety, compared to 8% of the general population.¹

26% of adults with IDD report depression, compared to less than 2% of adults without IDD.¹

94% intend to use learned healthy coping skills learned through Strong Minds in competition and daily life.

1. Osuna, A. R., Kennedy, J., Zhou, C., & Christakis, D. A. (2026). Anxiety, Depression, and Care Barriers in Adults With Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. *JAMA network open*, 9(2), e2560205. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2025.60205>