

# SPECIAL OLYMPICS FITNESS STRATEGIC PLAN

2022-2026



Special  
olympics  
Arkansas

2017  
LAW ENFORCEMENT  
TORCH RUN  
FOR SPECIAL OLYMPICS  
VIRGINIA



Special Olympics  
**Health**

MADE  
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FOUNDATION



Special Olympics  
**Health**

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The work of Special Olympics Health is made possible by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States, and by the Golisano Foundation around the world.

# SPECIAL OLYMPICS FITNESS

**We support individuals with intellectual disabilities to maximize their health and wellbeing by developing the knowledge, skills, and motivation to lead a healthy and active life.**

A focus on fitness means being physically active, eating healthy and staying hydrated. Fitness can boost athletic performance, prevent and reduce chronic and noncommunicable diseases, improve the quality of life and extend the number of years of life.

This Fitness Strategic Plan guides our fitness activities to maximize impact on the health and well-being of Special Olympics athletes. We operate under four main areas: **ongoing programming, education, technology, and advocacy.**

Whether you are an athlete, coach, volunteer, fitness professional, researcher, educator, or supporter of the Special Olympics movement, we encourage you to be involved in fitness promotion.





# OUR STRUCTURE FOR SUCCESS

## ONGOING PROGRAMMING

Goal	To provide high quality programming that supports Special Olympics athletes in achieving higher levels of fitness
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the number of athletes participating in 6+ weeks of structured fitness programming to 550,000</li> <li>• Increase school-based participants in 6+ weeks of structured fitness programming to 55,000</li> <li>• Reach 700,000 athletes in any structured fitness programming (of any duration)</li> </ul>
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update and promote fitness resources and technical assistance through enhanced communication and peer-to-peer learning among Program staff</li> <li>• Offer Performance Stations at all Major Games (including World Games and Regional Games) to introduce more Programs to the model and promote a healthy and safe competition experience</li> <li>• Develop the fitness through sport strategy and toolkit and disseminate to Programs through Special Olympics Health and Sport channels</li> </ul>
Key Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of athletes participating in structured fitness programming for 6 weeks or longer</li> <li>• Number of athletes participating in any structured fitness programming of any duration</li> <li>• Physical activity minutes, nutrition, and hydration trends</li> </ul>
Data Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special Olympics Annual Census</li> <li>• Special Olympics SO FitNow app</li> <li>• Unified Champion Schools Liaison survey and focus groups with athletes ages 40 and older</li> </ul>
Key Collaborators	SO Global Youth Engagement and Unified Champion Schools teams; SO Regional Health Managers (RHMs) and Regional Sport Directors (RSDs); Research & Evaluation; Leadership and Organizational Development



## OUR STRUCTURE FOR SUCCESS



Goal	To educate Special Olympics leaders to promote adoption of healthy lifestyle behaviors among athletes
Objectives	<p>Train 17,000 individuals in fitness and healthy lifestyle practices, inclusive of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12,000 sport coaches trained to promote fitness</li> <li>• 3,000 fitness professionals or students trained in inclusive fitness</li> <li>• 1,100 educators trained to implement school-based fitness programming</li> <li>• 900 fitness captains trained to promote fitness in sports settings</li> </ul>
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop resource toolkit for in-person or virtual coach education on fitness and health and include in coach education standards</li> <li>• Develop caregiver guide to provide information on how to support Special Olympics athletes to practice a healthy lifestyle on and off the field of play</li> <li>• Create Fitness Captain training and resources and launch globally with all needed translation support</li> </ul>
Key Indicators	Number of leaders trained to promote fitness (athletes, coaches, educators, fitness professionals)
Data Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• American Council on Exercise Inclusive Fitness Training Course completion numbers</li> <li>• Special Olympics Online Learning Portal fitness courses completed</li> <li>• Individuals trained by Programs as reported by Health Impact Grants</li> <li>• Reach of fitness industry professionals trained on inclusive fitness at conferences</li> </ul>
Key Collaborators	SO Coaching Education team; SO RHM and RSDs; fitness industry partners and professionals; universities with adapted physical activity and exercise science programs

## OUR STRUCTURE FOR SUCCESS

### TECHNOLOGY

Goal	To build awareness of fitness and health behaviors to facilitate health behavior change
Objectives	Reach 15,000 registered users in the SO FitNow app, inclusive of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 300 coaches</li> <li>• 300 caregivers</li> </ul>
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct first pilot of app outside of US with 3 countries in 2023.</li> <li>• Adapt app architecture to increase accessibility and usability for SO athletes</li> <li>• Create resources to increase app participation among coaches, caregivers, Unified Partners, and athletes</li> </ul>
Key Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of users registered in SO FitNow app (athletes, coaches, caregivers); segmented by active and inactive users</li> <li>• Improvements in accessibility and increased usage of app as reported by focus group participants on an annual basis</li> </ul>
Data Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SO FitNow app</li> <li>• Focus groups with athletes, coaches, caregivers, and Program staff</li> </ul>
Key Collaborators	Special Olympics Digital Health, Research & Evaluation, and Informational Technology teams

# OUR STRUCTURE FOR SUCCESS

## ADVOCACY



Goal	To increase accessible fitness opportunities for all individuals with intellectual disabilities
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [D] Increase the number of Program-based and regional-based fitness partnerships</li> <li>• [D] Increase the number of trained athlete leaders advocating for physical activity and nutrition access and policies</li> </ul>
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop global partnerships with companies and NGOs in the sport, fitness, and physical activity sector</li> <li>• Integrate physical activity and nutrition advocacy training and opportunities into health messenger advocacy training</li> <li>• Develop opportunities and resources for athletes and fitness centers to participate in inclusive fitness programming within the community</li> </ul>
Key Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of Fitness partnerships created</li> <li>• Number of athletes who report engaging in at least one physical activity advocacy initiative</li> </ul>
Data Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health Impact Grant reports</li> <li>• SOI and Regional Health staff Fitness partnerships reporting</li> <li>• Health Messenger reports</li> </ul>
Key Collaborators	Special Olympics Pillar 4: “Rise up to Reform” team; Regional Health staff

*[D] indicates a Developmental Objective. These refer to those objectives in which there is not yet enough data and tracking measures to establish a baseline.*



# IMPLEDGE TO BE FIT!



Whether you are an athlete, coach, volunteer, fitness instructor, researcher, Unified partner, educator, or friend of the Special Olympics movement, we need YOU to promote fitness!

This Fitness Strategic Plan will increase the impact we can have towards the Special Olympics Health Strategic Priority of expanding **fitness, wellness and health education programming**.

To learn more about our resources, please visit:

[resources.specialolympics.org/health/fitness](https://resources.specialolympics.org/health/fitness).

We thank you for your continued support of the Special Olympics movement.

## Contact

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