



As part of our 2016-2020 Strategic Plan for Health, Special Olympics has created a goal for achieving inclusive health. This guide defines inclusive health and provides examples of changes that organizations and partners can make to help achieve inclusive health.

### ***What is the problem?***

People with intellectual disabilities (ID) are one of the largest and most medically underserved groups in the world. Millions with ID lack access to quality health care and experience dramatically higher rates of preventable disease, chronic pain and suffering, and premature death in every country around the world.

### ***What is inclusive health?***

Inclusive health is defined as the inclusion of those with ID in mainstream health policies and laws, programming, and services, training programs, research, and funding streams.

### ***Why is inclusive health important?***

People with ID have a higher prevalence of adverse health conditions, less access to health promotion programs, inadequate attention to care needs, and inadequate access to quality health care services. Systemic challenges exacerbate these disparities, including limited training of, and inadequate reimbursement for, providers. As a result, people with ID are often excluded from existing health care systems, and have inequitable opportunity for health. To address and end health disparities in a sustainable way, Special Olympics needs other organizations to include people with ID in existing health programs and services. Inclusion is not only a matter of social justice but also impacts costs to society. Sometimes people with ID don't have access to health services, but other times they receive separate, parallel services. While separate services may have been designed to address inadequate access to health services, they are often costly and ultimately unsustainable efforts. Inclusive health allows for people with ID to take full advantage of the benefits of the same health programs and services experienced by people who do not have ID.

### ***How do I educate others on inclusive health?***

Trainings and resources for partners/organizations on how to achieve inclusive health are important not only for raising awareness of the health disparities that people with ID face and the resulting social problems, but also to provide direction and resources that organizations can use to become inclusive. These trainings and resources should include: 1) an explanation of the need for inclusive health; 2) examples of and resources on inclusive health; and 3) tangible and concrete action plans for each individual and/or organization to implement change within their community.

### ***What are some examples of inclusive health practices, policies, laws and programs?***

Inclusive health practices, policies, laws and programs represent norms, guidelines and/or activities to ensure that all people have equal access to health and health services. The key for inclusive health is finding solutions that are matched to barriers. For example, if the barrier for a person with ID getting an eye exam is finding a healthcare provider who knows how to

adapt the eye chart from letters to shapes, the solution may be finding a way to train providers to use adaptive screening tools. Or if the barrier to joining a fitness center is being able to complete the enrollment forms, the solution may be working with the fitness center to simplify their forms.

The following list outlines some of the ways in which your partners and other organizations can work to become more inclusive of people with ID. Special Olympics is in the process of identifying resources for inclusive health, and as they are created, they will be posted on the inclusive health resources page.

- Provide an all staff training to promote staff competence and sensitivity towards people with ID
- Modify all healthcare professional education (i.e., curriculum) to include information on working with people with ID, and provide training opportunities to exercise skills (i.e., rounds/placements)
- Revise information/resources (pamphlets, brochures, etc.) to be at the appropriate literacy level for people with ID (at grade level 3 or below) and print in a large, easy-to-read font (see example from Special Olympics Arkansas below).
- Provide services for free or at a reduced cost for people with ID
- Create protocol for reasonable adjustments to practices and programs for people with ID:
  - Provide longer appointment slots or appointments at a particular time of the day for patients with ID
  - Send a reminder (e.g., text) about appointment or exercise sessions
  - Have a staff coordinator specifically to manage care, referrals, and wellness opportunities for people with ID
  - Conduct pre-visits with patients to help them become comfortable with staff and procedures (see example below from SO Bharat)
  - Split appointments over multiple visits to reduce time spent in the office/clinic
  - Adapt health screening protocols (e.g., using pictures instead of letters for vision screenings)
  - Hold classes (health education, fitness, wellness etc.) that are open to various ability levels
  - Allow a personal aid or caregiver to attend wellness classes with an individual with ID
- Provide adaptive equipment for people with different ability levels
- Create policies and laws that promote the respect, dignity, autonomy and other human rights of people with ID in a manner consistent with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability
  - Policies and laws to not use restraints on patients with challenging behaviors, but rather to use other environmental and behavioral techniques for stress management
  - Policies about promoting behavioral counseling in place of pharmacologic treatment, if possible
  - Policies and laws about informed consent forms and processes that can be completed by a person with ID.

- Provide transportation to services or bring services to people with ID
  - If public transportation is not available or accessible, partner with an organization that can provide a shuttle
  - A “mobile” clinic can bring services directly to people with ID (see example from Special Olympics Hawaii below)
  - Having wellness classes take place in residential facilities also brings services directly to people with ID (see example from Special Olympics Florida below)

### ***What are some success stories from Special Olympics?***

Several Special Olympics Programs have worked with partners to make their organizations more inclusive:

- Share our Strength organization partnered with Special Olympics Arkansas to adapt existing Cooking Matters programing nutrition resources to be appropriate literacy levels for people with ID, by using visual depictions and simplifying recipes.
- Vision Bus partnered with Special Olympics Hawaii to bring vision screenings on the road and directly to where people with ID live.
- The YMCA of Greater Rochester NY partnered with Special Olympics to make their membership and paperwork more accessible for people with ID.
- The government of India partnered with Special Olympics Bharat (India) to provide free dental care across the country for people with ID, along with curriculum changes to dental schools to ensure that providers understand how to best treat people with ID; further, some of the dental facilities provide several pre-visits for patients with complex needs to ensure that they are comfortable with staff and the setting before receiving treatment.

### ***Where do I start?***

There are many changes that would promote the inclusion of people with ID. Organizations who are interested in making these changes should involve people with ID and their caregivers in the development and implementation of policies, practices, and programming that will impact their ability to access services. Finally, it will also be important to discuss with these stakeholders how to monitor the impact of the changes, to ensure that they are adequately improving access to quality care.

For additional resources, see below. If you have any questions about this FAQ or how to get started with inclusive health, please contact [inclusivehealth@specialolympics.org](mailto:inclusivehealth@specialolympics.org)

Literacy resources: <https://readable.io/>

Informed consent resources: <http://vkc.mc.vanderbilt.edu/etoolkit/general-issues/informed-consent/>