

# Community Builders Toolkit for Family Leaders

Section 5: Promoting Healthy Lifestyles

**Special Olympics**



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The *Community Builder Toolkit for Family Leaders, Section 5: Promoting Healthy Lifestyles* provides Power Point presentations, sample materials, templates and guidance for family leaders (both staff and volunteers) to support healthy lifestyles for athletes and their families.

**Note: This section builds on information provided in:**  
***Section 1: Orientation to Family Engagement***  
***Section 2: Planning for Successful Family Engagement***  
***Section 3: Welcoming Families***

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## Section 5: Promoting Healthy Lifestyles

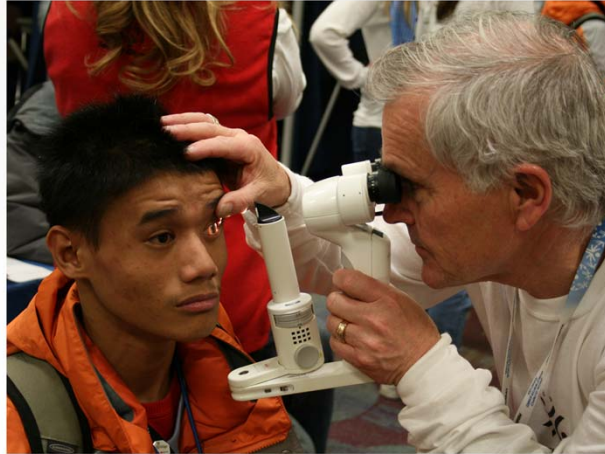
- Healthy Athletes screenings
- Group Activity
- Promoting healthy lifestyles across the organization
- Family Health Forums
- Materials for home use

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*The Community Builder Toolkit for Family Leaders, Section 5: Promoting Healthy Lifestyles* is intended for family leaders, Board Members, Program staff and key volunteers. The objective of this section is to provide tools that will educate and empower athletes and their families to develop healthy lifestyles. Key information includes:

- Healthy Athletes screenings
- Group Activity
- Promoting healthy lifestyles across the organization
- Family Health Forums
- Materials for home use

Healthy Athletes engages the medical community in meeting the need



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Special Olympics provides health screening and services for children, families and adults through the Healthy Athletes program. Special Olympics is the world's largest public health organization for people with intellectual disabilities, providing access to free health services for a population with many unmet needs. For many athletes in the developing world, Special Olympics Healthy Athletes screenings are the first time they've ever seen a doctor.

It is extremely important for families and caregivers to be part of the Healthy Athletes screening events. Here they can talk with doctors, get information about conditions, access free glasses and hearing aides for athletes, and learn about follow up care recommended. Inviting families to participate in these screenings is a first step to promoting healthy lifestyles.

# Promoting Healthy Lifestyles



## I'm In! Healthy Families

When families choose to make healthy living a priority, athletes are more successful in their sports and motivated to make healthy choices on their own.

I pledge to:

- Practice coach-recommended sports skills with athletes every week.
- Turn off the TV during meals and share some family time.
- Shut down my computer and go outside to play for an hour a day.
- Play active games with your children aged 2-7 years old using the Young Athletes Activity Guide.
- Use the TRAIN @ Home Nutrition and Exercise Guides.
- Get athletes and siblings involved in preparing healthy well-balanced meals and snacks.
- Drink water when I am thirsty.
- Make sure all family members have regular health check-ups.
- Try new things in the community to develop hobbies, friendships and independence.
- Wash my hands after using the latrine and before and after meals.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Program \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail address or phone number \_\_\_\_\_



Beyond attending Healthy Athletes screening events and assisting in getting athletes follow up care, families can also do much at home to promote health and physical fitness for athletes AND for themselves. Research shows that we tend to behave as others in our group do, so getting families involved in making healthy lifestyle choices helps influence athletes choices.

As we discussed in the Orientation to Family Engagement, Special Olympics works to support athletes in being physically fit and healthy, so promoting healthy lifestyles with families is a focus that is easy to incorporate into your Program. For example, coaches can provide tips, information can be included in newsletters, families can attend Healthy Athletes screenings and Family Health Forums. It is also a good starting place for engaging families because they naturally want what is best for athletes and appreciate getting ideas and help from Special Olympics to do more at home with athletes.

### Activity:

Break into 3 small groups and give each group copies of the Commitment Cards or Action Tips. Assign groups the following:

Group 1: Select 3 health action tips to share with families in newsletters, social media, brochures or other written materials. Revise the wording for publication, as appropriate.

Group 2: Select 3 health action tips that coaches might reinforce and brainstorm how they

could do so.

Group 3: Select at least 1 health action tip that families could track at home and develop 3 ways to recognize their progress

Share some of the main ideas from each group discussion.

# Summer World Games 2011

685 families committed to make a change in their lifestyle to be healthier

More committed to this focus area than any other



Special Olympics

The Action Tips and Commitment cards were used successfully at the World Games in Athens 2011 to collect commitments from families and contact information for future initiatives. Healthy families was the most popular commitment area and families proudly displayed ribbons “Healthy Families are Terrific” upon making the commitment.

Yet we all know how hard changing habits can be. Let’s talk about the ideas you had for promoting the healthy choices, engaging the community in the effort, and recognizing family efforts.



## Family Forum & Young Athletes Screening & Demonstration

Special Olympics

Some Programs have integrated a number of initiatives to draw more participation and have a higher impact. One example from Chinese Taipei was a Family Forum paired with Young Athlete demonstrations and Young Athlete Health Screenings to attract 100 families. As you can see, reviewing the action tips was part of the educational program.

Thinking about the goal of engaging a wide range of family members, what group would you target in promoting healthy lifestyles and why?



The first step in engaging families is getting them to attend sporting events. There they can witness the power of sports and be motivated to help athletes develop more skills through home training and healthy lifestyles. Other events can be added into your Summer or Winter Games. Athletes sports skills can be assessed by trained volunteers or coaches using the TRAIN program assessment equipment and materials, all free of charge due to a generous sponsor. Families can be engaged in doing the assessments, assisting with them and most importantly, reinforcing the healthy habits at home using the TRAIN @ Home guide with athletes. The guide provides simple exercises, nutritional guidance and charts to track your diet and exercise daily.





## Family Health Forum during the Unity Cup, together with Lions Clubs and UNICEF



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Family Health Forums are a good addition to Games as long as they are coordinated to enable families to both see competition and get involved in family activities. At the Africa Unity Cup families learned facts about ID. The educational program also offered the moral support that many families needed to take the first step for their children and get involved in Special Olympics.



Family Health Forum photos and feedback....



**To be here, I am healed  
....this is the best for my  
son and the other who is  
not intellectually  
disabled...**

**This has made it a lot  
easier to understand how  
to raise a child with an  
intellectual disability....**

In fact the event was life changing for some families new to Special Olympics.



Again there was a joint focus with a Young Athletes demonstration. Families were encouraged to practice the activities at home with their children. Starting early with active play at home is not only a good start for sports training, but also to promoting healthy lifestyles. We know from our research that families involved in Young Athletes also get involved in other fun family activities. Both parents and children are encouraged to be active, healthier and play together.

# e-Library Launched



- Interactive site allows families to post their stories and photos
- Highlights Program successes to support best practice sharing
- Provides access to both the Family Toolkit and Young Athletes Toolkit

KS Day in Nassau, Bahamas  
A Smashing Success  
By Vashti Thompson. 14 years



<http://resources.specialolympics.org>

"I carry on Eunice Kennedy Shriver's legacy as I spread the word at every opportunity that persons with Intellectual Disabilities are no different from anyone else."

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As you know, the e-Library gives access to many resources related to our family engagement goals. The resources for health promotion are especially rich.

Go to the link.

# What Works, What Helps



## Family Health Forum Tips



### FAMILY HEALTH FORUM TIPS

**PURPOSE:** Family Health Forums are designed to engage families of those with intellectual disabilities (ID) in Special Olympics and offer an environment where parents and caregivers can gain direct access to health information, resources, and support. The goal and objectives are to:

**GOAL:** Conduct increased outreach to the families of those with ID in a diverse set of communities worldwide.

#### OBJECTIVES:

1. Provide families of Special Olympics athletes with direct access to community leaders, health care professionals, and social service providers.
2. Provide orientation to new families as to what Special Olympics is, the services provided through such initiatives as Family Athletes and Young Athletes, and other community-based programs for people with ID.
3. Provide health care professionals, community leaders and social service providers with the opportunity to learn more about the challenges that athletes and their families face, and explore ways to help facilitate better access to health care, education, and inclusive activities.

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## International Resources

### Facts for Life

Fourth Edition



#### With advice on:

- Safe Motherhood and Newborn Health
- Child Development and Early Learning
- Breastfeeding
- Nutrition and Growth
- Immunization
- Diarrhoea
- Malaria
- HIV
- Child Protection and more...

Review the Family Health Forum Tips and Facts for Life. These are examples of some of the practical tools available in the e-Library to help educate families about health.

**Summarize:** Promoting healthy lifestyles is one of the easiest ways to engage families in Special Olympics. It can be done through coaches, family volunteers, athlete leaders, Healthy Athletes programs, and Young Athletes programs. Also materials that are designed with families in mind are readily available from the e-Library site: TRAIN @ Home guides, Young Athletes Activity Guide and Videos, PALA+ Sports challenge.