



SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND SYMPOSIA

BACKGROUND

Special Olympics has used the occasion of its World Games not just to host the largest gathering of sports competitions and pageantry for persons with intellectual disabilities around the world, but also as a stage for advancing social, scientific and policy research and activities that support the Special Olympics mission.

Going back to the Special Olympics World Summer Games in Connecticut in 1995, special scientific investigations, symposia and publications have been implemented. A brief review reflects the major activities and foci:

- 1995** – Conduct of three symposia, including at the United Nations and Yale Law School, about the rights and needs of persons with intellectual disabilities. Publication of a policy text.
- 1999** – Convening of a Special Olympics Strategic Research Plan Development Group, commissioning of scientific background papers, and issuance of request for proposals for research.
- 2001** – Convening of a U.S. Senate Appropriations Field Hearing by U.S. Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska; release of two scientific policy reports about the health status and needs of persons with intellectual disabilities; issuance by the U.S. Government Printing Office of a Hearing Report; subsequently, conduct of a national conference and issuance of a conference report by the U.S. Surgeon General concerning the health needs of persons with intellectual disabilities.
- 2003** – Conduct of a Scientific Symposium (Supporting Families), including presentation of 50 original papers from presenters from around the world; release of the Multinational Survey of Attitudes toward People with Intellectual Disabilities and publication and widespread dissemination of a monograph; conduct of seminars for Families and Special Olympics Program Leaders.
- 2005** – Conduct of an educational symposium for 400 college age youth in Tokyo and a high-level international policy symposium in Nagano addressing acceptance and tolerance throughout society; release of several research studies on media treatment of intellectual disabilities, youth attitudes toward intellectual disabilities in Japan and the United States, the health status and needs of people with intellectual disabilities, and preparation of health professionals to care for people with intellectual disabilities.

GUIDANCE

The conduct of relevant scientific studies and/or convening of scientific symposia are provided for in the World Games Agreements. Research supports the events; and the events facilitate widespread dissemination of important research results that help the global Special Olympics movement. Specifically, such research and symposia are to be collaborative efforts between Special Olympics and the Games Organizing Committee (GOC). Symposia are official events of the World Games. Since the research and symposia must have relevance not just in the host country, but around the world, Special Olympics takes a strong lead in establishing research and symposia themes and in conducting related special events. Special Olympics senior staff, Board and technical staff develop research and event ideas and themes and seek input and concurrence from counterparts at the GOC.

A symposium committee with representatives of relevant Special Olympics departments, the GOC and technical consultants guide the planning and implementation of symposia.

Planning for symposia must begin well in advance (up to two years before the World Games), particularly if new research is to be conducted that will be part of the symposia.

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Generally, Special Olympics will determine research themes and arrange for the conduct of research. The GOC can be very instrumental in assisting in the carrying out of research if it is conducted in the host country. Special Olympics normally will secure the necessary funding to carry out research and conduct Special Olympics-led symposia.

The GOC likewise may determine to undertake research on its own and create an event for its release. For such GOC-led research efforts, the GOC will be responsible for funding and carrying out the research with concurrence by Special Olympics.