Healthy Hearing Clinical Director

Special Olympics Health
MADE POSSIBLE BY Golisano FOUNDATION

Special Olympics Healthy Hearing (audiology) **identifies potential ear and hearing issues and determines additional ear care needs** for Special Olympics athletes and people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Through Healthy Hearing, volunteer ear health professionals and students provide education to athletes on potential ear and hearing issues and offer follow-up medical services, including earwax removal, swim mold preparation, hearing aid maintenance, and minor repairs. Additionally, recommendations are provided for community based follow-up care.

Purpose & Goals

The goal of Special Olympics Healthy Hearing is to enhance the ear health of Special Olympics athletes and people with IDD. This is achieved by:

- Expanding access to hearing care.
- Sharing knowledge regarding ear canal hygiene in children and adults with IDD.
- Identifying medical issues causing hearing loss and facilitating referrals for follow-up care to the appropriate medical professionals.
- Increasing audiologists' awareness of the hearing concerns of people with IDD, including awareness of the challenges encountered in diagnosing and accessing treatment options.
- Providing participating athletes with a list of regional audiologists and ear, nose, and throat specialists who specialize in caring for individuals with IDD

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Importance & Impact

Healthy Hearing screenings have found that a large percentage of Special Olympics athletes globally have untreated ear and hearing conditions.

- **39%** have blocked or partially blocked ear canals
- **39%** failed Puretone hearing examinations
- **24%** have permanent hearing loss