

Special Olympics Arkansas Athlete FAQ's

What exactly is Special Olympics?

Special Olympics is an international non-profit, providing year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of sports to children and adults with intellectual disabilities, free of charge. Special Olympics Arkansas serves 14,000 athletes across all counties in Arkansas

What is "intellectual disability"?

Intellectual disability is characterized by significantly sub-average intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with related limitations in two or more of the following adaptive skill areas: communication, self-care, home living, social skills, community use, self-direction, safety, and functional academic, leisure, and work. Intellectual disability manifests before age 18.

Who can participate?

Special Olympics is open to every person with an intellectual disability, regardless of the level or degree of that person's disability and whether or not that person also has other mental or physical disabilities.

Athletes must be at least 8 years old to compete at a sports competition. Athletes between 5–7 years of age can come out for practices, but cannot compete. There is no "cap" on how old an athlete can be. We have some very active athletes who are in their 50s and 60s and some are still going strong in their 70s!

What sports do you offer?

Athletes can choose from 21 different sports. [Click here to read more about sports offered](#)

Do you offer programs for athletes of all levels and abilities?

Special Olympics prides itself on providing programs for all skill levels. By using preliminary scores and times to create teams and brackets, we ensure a competition environment that is balanced in terms of skill, age and gender.

Where are you located?

Our headquarters are in North Little Rock, Arkansas, but we also have Field Representatives all across Arkansas who oversee the local volunteer programs. Visit our [Area locator page](#) to find a local Special Olympics Field Rep or Area Director near you.

Who finances you?

Our programs are free to all eligible athletes and are made possible thanks to the generous support of individuals, foundations and businesses who believe in the values of the Special Olympics.

What are the benefits of participating?

Children and adults with intellectual disabilities who participate in Special Olympics develop improved physical fitness and motor skills, greater self-confidence and a more positive self-image. They grow mentally and socially and discover their own courage as contributing members of their communities. The rewards of Special Olympics are truly life-long!

Does it cost to participate in Special Olympics?

The Special Olympics is absolutely free! The programs we offer are free for our competitors thanks to the generous support of individuals, organizations and corporations in our communities. We receive no federal or state funding.

Can my athlete participate in a sport he or she doesn't know how to play?

Absolutely! Special Olympics believes that everyone can benefit from being part of a team, no matter their skill level. Our coaches and volunteers will work with your athlete to teach them the skills they need to participate in their sport of choice.

What is the dress code at practices?

Athletes should wear appropriate athletic attire to sport trainings. Usually, this includes athletic shoes with non-marking soles, shorts or sweats, and a t-shirt. Swimmers must wear a swimsuit and bring a towel. Athletes who are not dressed appropriately will be asked to observe the practice for that day.

How do I find out what training and competitions are upcoming in my area?

Go to the [Events Calendar](#) to find out about events and competitions near you.

Does Special Olympics need volunteers?

Yes! Volunteers are the lifeblood of Special Olympics Arkansas. They serve as coaches, officials, trainers, directors and a variety of other valuable roles. Special Olympics Arkansas is always on the look-out for new helping hands. Do you want to help a few hours per week? Once a month? Once a year? All contributions great and small leave their mark. You can help. You can make a difference. Go to our [Volunteers page](#) to find out how.