



# Using Fit-5 Resources to Increase Care Providers' Awareness of Special Olympics and their Ability to Implement Physical Activity

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## PROJECT SUMMARY

Many adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) face barriers to being physically active. Some don't know how to start, and others lack support from care providers—often because providers don't feel confident leading activities or don't know about helpful programs like Special Olympics.

To change this, we introduced care providers from Community Living Victoria to **Fit 5**, a Special Olympics program that promotes healthy habits through exercise, nutrition, and hydration. Our goal was to build care providers' confidence and give them simple tools to use Fit 5 in group homes. We also gathered feedback from both care providers and residents. The training included:

- A 3-hour in-person workshop introducing Fit 5
- Weekly Zoom check-ins for three weeks to offer support and troubleshoot challenges

**What We Learned:** Care providers responded well—88% said the training gave them the tools they needed, and 75% would recommend it. They felt more confident leading activities and had a better understanding of Special Olympics. Everyone used Fit 5 in their homes, mostly selecting simpler exercises that fit the needs of older adults or those with mobility challenges. Some activities, like balance exercises, were skipped due to safety concerns. Providers wanted more support to progress exercises and suggested agency-wide training and policies to help make physical activity part of daily routines. Group home residents enjoyed the program and wanted to keep going.

This project created a valuable link between residential services and Special Olympics, showing that with a little support, care providers can confidently lead physical activity programs that make a difference.

## KEY MESSAGES

**A short training session can make a big impact:** care providers felt more confident and better equipped to support physical activity after completing the program.

**Fit 5 is adaptable:** its simple exercise options worked well for older adults and those with mobility limitations in group home settings.

**Strong partnerships matter:** this project helped bridge the gap between residential services and Special Olympics, opening new doors for physical activity support.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Special Olympics Canada funding helped us secure additional support for a graduate student internship through the **Mitacs Accelerate** program.
- Results and recommendations were shared with **Community Living Victoria Residential Services**.
- A journal article based on this project will be published in *PALAESTRA* in **September 2025**.
- A second article is being prepared for the *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*.