



Helping Special Olympics athletes achieve better overall **physical health outcomes**

Promoting healthy nutrition Enhancing physical health Increasing physical activity



PHYSICAL HEALTH

Helping Special Olympics athletes by **improving their access to inclusive healthcare** and healthcare professionals

Increasing access to inclusive healthcare Promoting better healthcare experiences



ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

Health Framework



SOCIAL HEALTH

Helping Special Olympics athletes exhibit **greater belonging and social well-being**

Improving social and interpersonal skill development Fostering socialization and inclusion



EMOTIONAL HEALTH

Helping Special Olympics athletes exhibit **improved emotional well-being**

Improving mental wellness and building emotional skills



AIM: To support Special Olympics athletes in achieving better overall health by focusing on three key priorities: promoting healthy nutrition, increasing physical activity, and improving health outcomes. These priorities work together under the physical health pillar to help athletes reach and maintain optimal well-being.



Nutritional Choices

- ✓ Provide athletes with foundational nutrition education
- ✓ Raise awareness of how healthy eating supports athlete health and well-being
- ✓ Empower athletes to make informed nutritional choices that enhance their health and performance

How?

Nutrition education can be provided to athletes, coaches, volunteers, and caregivers through various approaches, including:

- Host nutrition education sessions
- Share accessible nutrition resources
- Encourage discussions about healthy eating during practices and competitions



Physical Health Outcomes

- ✓ Manage and improving existing health conditions
- ✓ Enhance overall physical fitness
- ✓ Equip athletes with resources and support to take charge of their health

How?

- Support athletes' physical activity in current sports programs
- Offer athletes additional fitness-focused opportunities
- Conduct Healthy Athletes Health Promotion and FUNfitness screenings
- Encourage athletes to participate in multiple Special Olympics sports programs



Physical Activity

- ✓ Educate athletes on physical activity guidelines
- ✓ Offer structured physical activity programs (e.g., fitness classes, group exercises)
- ✓ Empower athletes to make physical activity a regular part of their lives

How?

- Encourage athletes to participate in multiple sports programs
- Offer new fitness opportunities, like walking clubs
- Organize chapter-specific challenges, such as step challenges
- Share Health Canada's physical activity guidelines to help athletes meet recommended activity levels

**FUN
FACT**

**+2.5
YEARS**

Participation in Special Olympics can increase lifespan by over 2.5 years for athletes who engage in aerobic activity 3 or more times per week, while also reducing the risk of diabetes by 15%.



AIM: To support Special Olympics athletes in achieving better overall social health by focusing on two key priorities: promoting social skill development and fostering socialization and inclusion. These priorities work together under the social health pillar to help athletes build and maintain strong social connections.



Social Skill Development

- ✓ Support athletes in developing social skills for positive interactions with others
- ✓ Help athletes improve interpersonal communication and relationship-building skills

How?

- Offer health leadership training to athletes
- Support engagement opportunities, such as involving athletes in active roles on social media
- Provide opportunities for athletes to participate in campaign initiatives and committees
- Empower athletes to contribute to various projects.



Socialization and Inclusion

- ✓ Support athletes in feeling more included in their communities
- ✓ Provide athletes with continued opportunities for meaningful socialization

How?

- Support athletes by offering multiple socialization opportunities through sports
- Provide athletes with socialization experiences through non-sport events, such as dances and unified activities
- Organize team activities and youth programs to further foster social connections

FUN FACT



Research shows that participating in Special Olympics helps kids with intellectual and developmental disabilities develop physical literacy, enabling them to play alongside their peers and fostering a stronger sense of belonging and social connection!



EMOTIONAL HEALTH

AIM: To support Special Olympics athletes in improving their emotional wellness by focusing on two key priorities: enhancing social and interpersonal skills and fostering a sense of inclusion within their communities. These priorities work together under the emotional health pillar to help athletes achieve and maintain optimal emotional well-being.



Emotional Skill Development



Support Special Olympics athletes in improving their emotional wellness



Enhance athletes' social and interpersonal skills

How?

- Support athletes by offering mental health and wellness workshops
- Provide other program components to support emotional wellness
- Provide resources, tools, and training to athletes, coaches, volunteers, and caregivers to promote coping strategies, resilience, and overall mental wellness

FUN FACT

**RISK OF
DEPRESSION**
▼49%

Participation in Special Olympics can reduce the risk of depression by 49%, highlighting the strong connection between involvement and improved emotional well-being.



ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

AIM: To support Special Olympics athletes in achieving better overall health by focusing on two key priorities: enhancing access to care and improving the healthcare experience. These priorities work together under the Access to Care pillar to help athletes reach and maintain optimal well-being.



Access to Healthcare

- ✓ Support access to healthcare tailored for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- ✓ Enhance existing healthcare access to better meet the specific needs of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities

How?

- Train Clinical Directors to support inclusive healthcare delivery
- Host Healthy Athletes screenings to identify and address health needs
- Build inclusive healthcare provider networks
- Facilitate referrals through the Healthy Athletes program
- Deliver educational presentations to healthcare students on working with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities



Positive Healthcare Experiences

- ✓ Train healthcare professionals on best practices for working with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- ✓ Promote more positive interactions and outcomes between athletes and healthcare providers

How?

- Collaborate with medical colleges to develop curriculum and offer professional learning credits
- Deliver presentations with athlete-health messengers to educate students on working with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Train volunteers at Healthy Athletes events using the SOI inclusive healthcare training module
- Support Chapters in advocating for policy change at the provincial/territorial government level

**FUN
FACT**

**\$1M -
1.5M
SAVED**

Participation in Special Olympics can save between 1 million to 1.5 million dollars in healthcare costs, highlighting the significant financial impact of improving access to care for athletes with intellectual and developmental disabilities.