



**Special  
Olympics**  
Alberta



## *Frequently Asked Questions*

### *What is Special Olympics?*

Special Olympics is a global organization that unleashes the human spirit through the transformative power and joy of sport, everyday around the world.

Through programming in sports, health, education and community building, Special Olympics is changing the lives of people with intellectual disabilities solving the global injustice, isolation, intolerance and inactivity they face.

Today, Special Olympics is more than an event: it is one of the world's most powerful and effective social movements.

### *Who Participates In Special Olympics?*

Special Olympics welcomes people with intellectual disabilities from every part of the province. Our participants range in age from two years old to more than 80 years old.

The minimum age requirement for participation in Special Olympics competition is eight years of age.

For younger individuals, we have Active Start and FUNDamentals, two innovative sports play programs for children with intellectual disabilities between the ages of two to 12, which introduces them to the world of sports. These programs engage young athletes through a variety of developmentally appropriate play activities that are designed to foster physical, cognitive and social development.

### *What is an intellectual disability?*

According to the American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD), an individual is considered to have an intellectual disability based on the following three criteria:

1. Intellectual functional level (IQ) is below 70-75
2. Significant limitations exist in two or more adaptive skill areas
3. The condition manifests itself before the age of 18

Adaptive skills are assessed in the person's typical environment across all aspects of an individual's life. A person with limits in intellectual functioning who does not have limits in adaptive skill areas may not be diagnosed as having an intellectual disability.

A person is eligible to participate in Special Olympics if they have been identified by an agency or professional as having intellectual disabilities as determined by their localities.

Some examples of intellectual disabilities include Down Syndrome, Williams Syndrome and individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

## What are the benefits of participation in Special Olympics?

According to a Special Olympics impact study with the University of Massachusetts Boston and University of Utah in 2005, approximately 90 per cent of family members report improvement in both social skills and friendships.



In the same study, a report of approximately half of all Special Olympics athletes (48 per cent) in North America engage in physical activity or exercise for more than three hours per week in addition to their involvement with Special Olympics which is considerably higher than the average 25 per cent of the general population.

More than half (52 per cent) of adult Special Olympics athletes in North America are employed with half of those in competitive employment.

## What is the history of Special Olympics in Alberta?

The first Special Olympics programs in Alberta were grassroots efforts in communities like Edmonton and Lethbridge. Taking their inspiration from the first Canadian Special Olympics National Games in 1969, these communities organized programs throughout the 1970s.

Special Olympics Alberta was incorporated in 1980 as an accredited chapter of Special Olympics Canada and provides support to affiliates in more than 100 communities throughout the province.

Special Olympics Alberta provides year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

## What is our reach in Alberta?

More than 3,000 athletes with an intellectual disability participate in sports programs across the province. This is achieved because of the efforts of more than 1,200 dedicated coaches and volunteers.

Individuals who compete in Special Olympics develop improved physical fitness and motor skills and greater self-confidence. They exhibit courage and enthusiasm, and build lasting friendships. These life skills enhance their ability to live productive lives. More than ever, Special Olympics athletes hold jobs, own homes, go to school and successfully confront life challenges on a daily basis.



## Alberta provides 18 Olympic-type sports.

### Summer

- 5-Pin Bowling
- 10-Pin Bowling
- Athletics
- Basketball
- Bocce
- Golf
- Powerlifting
- Rhythmic Gymnastics
- Soccer
- Softball
- Swimming

### Winter

- Alpine Skiing
- Cross-Country Skiing
- Curling
- Figure Skating
- Floor Hockey
- Snowshoeing
- Speed Skating