



**Special Olympics
Maryland**

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Created by the
Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation
Authorized and accredited by
Special Olympics Inc.
for the benefit of persons
with intellectual disabilities

Special Olympics Maryland Fact Sheet

WHO WE ARE: Special Olympics Maryland is a statewide year-round sports program for Maryland's children and adults with intellectual disabilities and/or closely related developmental disabilities. We currently offer over 25 sports at a state level. There are currently 10,000 athletes age eight and above participating in SOMD programs.

OUR HISTORY: The concept for Special Olympics was born in the early 1960s when Eunice Kennedy Shriver started a day camp for people with intellectual disabilities at her home in Rockville, Maryland. The first International Special Olympics Games were held in 1968 at Soldier's Field, Chicago with 1,000 athletes participating from 26 states and Canada.

HOW WE'VE GROWN: Mrs. Shriver's vision of an international sports organization for people with intellectual disabilities, one that would bring the joy and pride developed through sports competition to those the world believed could not learn or play sports, has grown into one of the largest and most successful sports and volunteer organizations in the world. Special Olympics programs are in every state and in over 160 countries worldwide, serving more than one-million athletes.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE: Throughout Maryland, there are about 150,000 persons with intellectual disabilities and/or closely related developmental disabilities who can benefit from our sports programs. Eligible athletes are all children and adults, at least eight-years-old, with intellectual disabilities, a cognitive delay, or a closely related developmental disability. Eligible athletes have functional limitations in both general learning and in adaptive skills. This typically includes all individuals with intellectual disabilities, combination deaf-blindness, autism, traumatic head injury, and most individuals with cerebral palsy and specific learning disabilities. Children age six and seven may participate in Special Olympics training, but may not compete.

ALL YEAR LONG...AND IT'S FREE! There are training and competition opportunities every day throughout the year. Our programs are free to all eligible athletes and are possible thanks to the generous support from individuals and businesses who believe in Special Olympics athletes. Financial support comes almost exclusively from individuals, organizations, corporations, and foundations. The average cost of supporting one athlete, for one sport is \$500.00 and many of our athletes choose to participate in multiple sports.

Be a fan.

Be a fan of sports and of competition and winning, of courage and determination, of dignity and strength and grace under pressure, of empowerment and of victory, of acceptance and tolerance, of inclusion, of unity and togetherness, of fun and joy, of courtesy and kindness, of inspiration. Be a fan of possibilities.