



Special Olympics
Northern California & Nevada
Be a fan™

Program Summary

Special Olympics Northern California and Nevada is a free year-round sports program for children and adults with mental retardation/developmental disabilities. Sports training and competitions are offered throughout the state in: alpine and cross country skiing, aquatics, athletics (track & field), basketball, bowling, figure skating, powerlifting, soccer, softball, volleyball, gymnastics, golf, cycling, speed skating, floor hockey, tennis, roller skating, and bocce.

Our History

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

Eligibility

Throughout Northern California and Nevada, it is estimated there are more than 350,000 individuals with developmental disabilities who can benefit from our sports programs. Eligible athletes are all children and adults, at least eight-years-old, with mental retardation/developmental disabilities who have a slower rate of learning and a limited capacity to learn. This typically includes all individuals with mental retardation, combination deaf-blindness, autism, traumatic head injury, and most individuals with cerebral palsy and specific learning disabilities. Students in intensity levels III - VI are eligible regardless of their classification. Children ages five through seven may participate in Special Olympics training, but may not compete.

Our Community-based Program

Special Olympics is probably best known for its community-based program, where athletes are children and adults who participate in 12 weeks of training and competition – including 10 weeks of training followed by local competitions, regional qualifiers and sports championships. Training sessions and competitions take place during the athlete's own time, often in the evenings and on weekends.

Our School Partnership Program

The Schools Partnership Program is the newest and fastest growing Special Olympics Program in Northern California and Nevada and focuses on school age children. Through a unique partnership with school districts and county education offices, special education students have the opportunity to participate in sports training and competition within the school day. Student athletes learn specific skills, participate in real sports, get to be part of a team and compete in tournaments wearing uniforms. Students train from a minimum of eight weeks in soccer, basketball and track and field, culminating in at least one tournament.

Because the program is highly visible on school campuses during training and competition, it creates a better understanding of the athlete students and their abilities among many different groups. Traditional students have the opportunity to appreciate and even support Special Education students at competitions at school or nearby.

As with all Special Olympics programs, the Schools Partnership Program is completely free to all participants. Special Olympics pays for all equipment and uniforms, sports training guides and curriculum. We also provide a grant to help offset the costs of a Teacher on Special Assignment (a school district employee) to coordinate the program.

Students of all abilities between the ages of 6 and 22 years of age are eligible to participate.

Unified Sports and MATP. Unified Sports® is a team experience that combines approximately equal numbers of athletes with and without mental retardation/developmental disabilities, of similar age and ability. Our Unified Sports® programs include Aquatics, Athletics, Basketball, Soccer, and Softball. Unified



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Sports ® broadens the scope of athletic competition for athletes and spectators. The program facilitates inclusion of Special Olympics athletes throughout the community.

For athletes with severe disabilities, Special Olympics created its Motor Activities Training Program (MATP), developed by physical educators, physical therapists, and recreation therapists, for those athletes who have severe disabilities. MATP emphasizes training and participation rather than competition.

Volunteers. Athletes are *why* we exist, and volunteers are *how* we exist. More than 16,000 volunteers make it possible to offer such a wide breadth of local programs. Volunteers are the lifeblood of Special Olympics Northern California & Nevada. They serve as coaches, officials, trainers, directors, and in a variety of other valuable roles. Whether it's a few hours or 25 years, what our volunteers donate is priceless. They energize our program every day and, in return, they gain their own rewarding experience.

Cost to Athletes: There are training and competition opportunities every day within Special Olympics Northern California and Nevada, 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. We are not a United Way agency and receive no federal funds. Financial support comes almost exclusively from individuals, organizations, corporations, and foundations.

Special Olympics is the only organization authorized by the International Olympic Committee to use "Olympics" worldwide.