

FACT SHEET

VISION

Our vision is an inclusive world for all, driven by the power of sport, through which people with intellectual disabilities live active, healthy, and fulfilling lives.

MISSION

Special Olympics 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 friendships with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

HISTORY

Founded by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, the first International Special Olympics Games were held at Chicago's Soldier Field in 1968. Indiana's involvement began with those first Games.

PARTICIPATION

In 2024, 19,000 children and adults in Indiana trained and competed through county programs and school programs. To be eligible to compete in Special Olympics, an individual must be 8 years of age or older AND have been identified by an agency or professional as having an intellectual disability or closely related developmental disability. For those under age 8, the Young Athletes program and Unified Champion Schools program is available.

OUTREACH

Indiana's focus is on the development of community-based programs as well as Unified Champion Schools programs in each county to increase the number of participating athletes.

VOLUNTEERS

Special Olympics Indiana (SOIN) is an organization run almost entirely by volunteers. More than 8,500 volunteers provide the help needed to offer the sports training and competition programs.

SUPPORT

SOIN is a nonprofit organization funded through private donations and fundraising projects across the state.

SCHEDULE

SOIN athletes train and compete year-round. Five statewide competitions highlight the annual schedule. Special Olympics World Games are held every two years, alternating between winter and summer sports. In addition, every four years Team Indiana competes in the Special Olympics USA Games.

PROGRAMS

Special Olympics provides a variety of competition opportunities for athletes of all abilities. Most Special Olympics events have few differences from the sport played by individuals without disabilities. Additional program opportunities include:

- Athlete Leadership
- County Programs
- Unified Champions Schools™ & Champions Together
- Healthy Athletes
- Unified Fitness Clubs
- Unified Sports®

SPORTS

Alpine Skiing*	Figure Skating**	Kayaking	Speed Skating**
Badminton	Flag Football*	Motor Activities	Swimming*
Basketball*	Floor Hockey	Netball	Table Tennis
Bocce*	Floorball	Open Water Swimming	Tennis**
Bowling*	Football (Soccer)*	Pickleball**	Track & Field*
Cricket	Golf*	Powerlifting*	Triathlon**
Cornhole*	Gymnastics**	Roller Skating	Volleyball*
Cross Country Skiing	Rhythmic Gymnastics	Sailing	
Cycling*	Handball	Snowboarding*	
Dancesport	Horseshoes**	Snowshoeing*	
Equestrian*	Judo	Softball*	

* Sports offered in Indiana

ORGANIZATION

SPECIAL OLYMPICS INC. (SOI)

Special Olympics Inc. is the international governing body of the Special Olympics movement. Based in Washington D.C., SOI provides official rules and policies, and coordinates global initiatives and competitions.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS INDIANA (SOIN)

Based in Indianapolis, SOIN is accredited to conduct all aspects of the program in the state. In addition to conducting competition events, the state office manages fundraising, public relations, coaches training, volunteer registration, area and county programs, outreach and general administration.

REGIONAL MANAGERS

Regional managers lead SOIN’s efforts to increase participation and improve the athlete experience. Growth and quality improvement are accomplished by the development of new County Programs, cultivation and support of existing County Programs, and training volunteers who have the biggest impact on the athlete experience. Regional managers oversee the County Program’s annual accreditation process that serves as the framework for the recruitment of new athletes, volunteers and coaches to increase the capacity to support quality growth.

AREA PROGRAMS

Indiana counties are grouped geographically into 10 Area Programs, each run by a committee of volunteers known as the Area Management Team. The Area Director and Area Competition Director oversee the Area Program, which includes regular coaches’ meetings, sectional competitions, and at least one bowling tournament and one track and field meet each year.

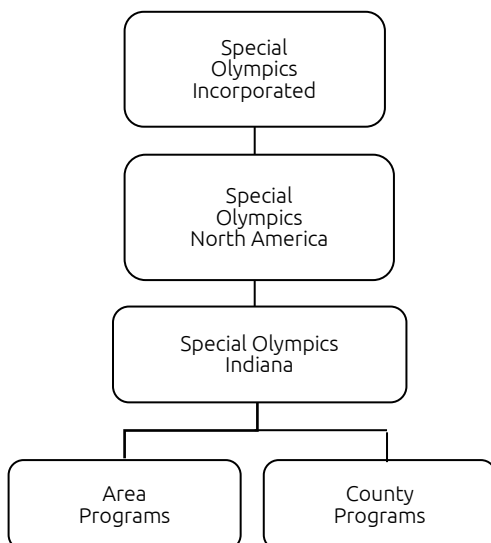
COUNTY PROGRAMS

County Programs have a committee of volunteers responsible for making year-round sports training and competition available to all eligible athletes within its boundaries. Though usually made up of one county, some programs may consist of multiple counties. The county coordinator is appointed to lead the County Management Team to oversee the program’s operation.

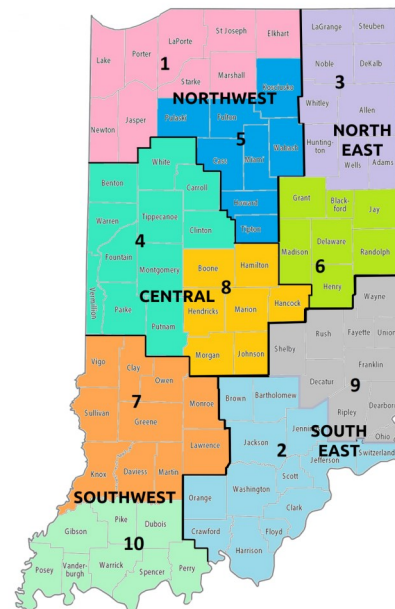
COUNTY-ONLY POLICY

Only accredited County Programs can register, train and enter athletes in SOIN competition. Local teams must register, train and enter athletes for SOIN competition through a County Program. Local teams are any school, workshop, group home or family that provides Special Olympics training for its members (students, clients, employees, family member).

ORGANIZATION CHART



REGIONAL & AREA MAP



ATHLETE ELIGIBILITY

Persons are eligible to compete in Special Olympics provided they are 8 years of age or older (those ages 2 to 7 are eligible for the Unified Champion Schools™);

AND

have been identified by an agency or professional as having an intellectual disability;

OR

have a closely related developmental disability such as those who have functional limitations, both in general learning and in adaptive skills such as recreation, work, independent living, self-direction or self-care.

NOTE: People with functional limitations based solely on a physical, behavioral, emotional, specific learning disability or sensory disability are not eligible. Special Olympics does not determine whether a person has an intellectual disability, but bases eligibility on the identification made by an agency or professional.

For specific questions on eligibility, contact the State Office.

Who is eligible?

