

UNIFIED FITNESS CLUBS



INTRODUCTION

Unified Fitness Clubs bring together individuals with and without intellectual disabilities to participate in inclusive, non-competitive health and fitness activities. Clubs provide opportunities to build fitness, learn about healthy lifestyles, and develop meaningful friendships.

For more information, visit SOIndiana.org/unified-fitness-clubs/ or contact Madeline Wilks (mwilks@soindiana.org)

PURPOSE

Unified Fitness Clubs were created to offer community members, Special Olympics athletes, and individuals with intellectual disabilities a consistent opportunity to engage in physical activity. Through regular exercise, participants work toward improved health, stronger fitness levels, better understanding of healthy habits, and deeper social connections.

REGISTRATION

Clubs may register year-round at SOIndiana.org/unified-fitness-clubs/. Special Olympics athletes must complete all required athlete registration materials, and Unified Partners must complete the Class A volunteer registration. Individuals with intellectual disabilities may join a Unified Fitness Club even if they are not active in Special Olympics sports training.

LEADERSHIP

Each club must be led by two co-directors (one Special Olympics athlete and one Special Olympics volunteer). Co-directors receive training on how to start and manage a club.

MEMBERSHIP

All members of a Unified Fitness Club must be registered as Special Olympics athletes or volunteers. Clubs are encouraged to maintain a membership balance in which 25–75 percent of participants are individuals with intellectual disabilities. While there is no required minimum or maximum size, larger clubs often find it easier to pair participants according to similar abilities.

PARTICIPATION

Clubs are expected to organize at least one group walk or fitness activity each month. Members should also be encouraged to stay active on their own between club meetings. Walking is recommended as the primary activity because it is accessible to all fitness levels and does not require special equipment. However, clubs may incorporate a variety of other activities such as hiking, stretching, yoga, biking, or strength training to support well-rounded fitness. Activities may be scheduled alongside sports practices as long as they go beyond basic skill development. Clubs typically operate year-round, taking breaks when needed and often planning activities in eight-week cycles. Photos, health metrics, and success stories are requested periodically for grant reporting and program promotion.

ACTIVITY TRACKING

Members are responsible for tracking their own steps, miles, or other movement using personal activity trackers or mobile apps. This data should be collected on a weekly basis to document activity and ensure accurate participation records. Data will be used for grant reporting and program promotion.

HEALTH METRICS

Clubs may receive equipment to help collect basic health information, including height, weight, and blood pressure. Training is provided to ensure proper use of these tools. Health metrics should be collected at least once per year and are kept confidential. The information is used for grant reporting and to demonstrate the positive impact of regular physical activity within Unified Fitness Clubs.

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

Clubs or members who remain inactive for six months will be moved to inactive status and must re-register before resuming participation. These policies help maintain accurate records and ensure clubs remain engaged and effective.

UNIFIED FITNESS CLUBS



ACTIVE UNIFIED FITNESS CLUBS (as of January 2025)

Adams-Wells County

Gibson County

Putman County

Allen County

Jackson County

St. Joseph County

Clark-Floyd County

Johnson County

Steuben County

Clinton County

Madison County

Tippecanoe County

Delaware County

Morgan County

White County

Dubois County