



SPECIAL OLYMPICS CANADA AND SPECIAL OLYMPICS BRITISH COLUMBIA
ELIGIBILITY FOR PARTICIPATION POLICY

This Policy has been prepared by Special Olympics Canada and is a Pan-Canadian Policy applicable to Special Olympics Canada and its Chapters. This document cannot be modified by a Chapter without consultation and approval from Special Olympics Canada.

EFFECTIVE DATE: SEPTEMBER 16, 2019

LAST REVISED: December 7, 2024

Definitions

1. The following terms have these meanings in this Policy:
 - a) “*Athlete*” – an individual registered as an Athlete with Special Olympics Canada or a Chapter
 - b) “*Chapter*” – means the Provincial or Territorial Special Olympics organization recognized by Special Olympics Canada as a provincial or territorial governing body of Special Olympics
 - c) “*Organization-sanctioned event or activity*” – means any local, regional, provincial or national games, competitions, events, programs, or activities sanctioned by Special Olympics Canada or the Chapter.

Purpose

2. This Policy describes the criteria an Athlete must meet to be eligible to participate in Special Olympics.

Eligibility

3. The mandate of Special Olympics is to provide sports programs for people with intellectual disabilities.

SOI’s [General Rules](#) state that a person is considered to have an intellectual disability for purposes of determining their eligibility to participate in Special Olympics if that person satisfies any one of the following requirements:

- (1) The person has been identified by an agency or professional as having an intellectual disability as determined by their localities; or
- (2) The person has a cognitive delay, as determined by standardized measures such as intelligent quotient or "IQ" testing or other measures which are generally accepted within the professional community as being a reliable measurement of the existence of a cognitive delay; or
- (3) The person has a closely related developmental disability. A "closely related developmental disability" means having functional limitations in both general learning (such as IQ) and adaptive skills (such as in recreation, work, independent living, self-direction, or self-care). However, persons whose functional limitations are based solely on a physical, behavioral, or emotional disability or a specific learning or sensory disability are not eligible to participate as Special Olympics athletes.



If there is any uncertainty about eligibility, the opinion of a professional will be required and considered.

4. Athletes, if applicable, must also meet the eligibility criteria described in the following documents:
 - a) *Eligibility for Participants with Down Syndrome Policy* (this policy describes how a person with a Symptomatic Atlantoaxial instability can participate in Special Olympics)
 - b) *Blood-Borne Contagious Infections Policy* (this policy describes how a person with blood-borne contagious infections can participate in Special Olympics)
5. Individuals interested in participating as Athletes in Special Olympics must register with the applicable Chapter, which effectively registers them with Special Olympics Canada, and agree to abide by the sport rules, policies, codes of conduct, philosophies, and practices of Special Olympics Canada and its applicable Chapter.
6. No Athlete may be excluded from registration because of a prohibited ground identified in applicable Human Rights Legislation, which may include, but not limited to, race or perceived race, nationality, ancestry, place of origin, color, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, class, marital status, family status, religion, political belief, physical or mental disability, economic status or source of income; unless there is reasonable justification or to the point of undue hardship.

AGE REQUIREMENTS

7. The minimum age for participation in a community program is at the discretion of each Chapter in consultation with the accredited community/program. There is no maximum age limitation for participation in community programs.
8. There are minimum age limits for participation in sanctioned Special Olympics competitions. Each Chapter sets minimum age requirements for participation in general competitions and for qualifying competitions in advance of Provincial/Territorial Games and for Provincial/Territorial Games.
9. For other competitions, the age requirements are as follows:
 - a) National Games - The minimum age requirement is 14 years of age as of January 1st of the year of the competition.
 - b) World Games - The minimum age requirement is 15 years of age as of January 1st of the year of the competition, as set by Special Olympics International.
10. There is no maximum age limitation for participation in Special Olympics competitions.

Appeals

11. Decisions made by a Special Olympics Canada or a Chapter related to the eligibility of an Athlete can be appealed per the terms of the *Appeal Policy*.
