

ATHLETE ELIGIBILITY

SECTION L - STATEMENT OF ELIGIBILITY FOR SPECIAL OLYMPICS

(excerpt from the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules)

1. **General Statement of Eligibility.** Special Olympics training and competition is open to every person with mental retardation who is at least eight years of age and who registers to participate in Special Olympics as required by the General Rules.
2. **Age Requirements.** There is no maximum age limitation for participation in Special Olympics. The minimum age requirement for participation in Special Olympics competition is eight years of age. An Accredited Program may permit children who are at least six years old to participate in age-appropriate Special Olympics training programs offered by that Accredited Program, or in specific (and age-appropriate) cultural or social activities offered during the course of a Special Olympics event. Such children may be recognized for their participation in such training or other non-competition activities through certificates of participation, or through other types of recognition approved by SOI which are not associated with participation in Special Olympics competition. However, no child may participate in a Special Olympics competition (or be awarded medals or ribbons associated with competition) before his or her eighth birthday.
3. **Degree of Disability.** Participation in Special Olympics training and competition is open to all persons with mental retardation who meet the age requirements, regardless of the level or degree of that person's disability, and whether or not that person also has other mental or physical disabilities, so long as that person registers to participate in Special Olympics as required by the General Rules.
4. **Identifying Persons with Mental Retardation.** A person is considered to have mental retardation for purposes of determining his or her eligibility to participate in Special Olympics if that person satisfies any one of the following requirements:
 - a. The person has been identified by an agency or professional as having mental retardation as determined by their localities; or
 - b. The person has a cognitive delay, as determined by standardized measures such as intelligent quotient or "IQ" testing or other measures that are generally accepted within the professional community in that Accredited Program's nation as being a reliable measurement of the existence of a cognitive delay; or
 - c. 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 in 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, but may be eligible to volunteer for Special Olympics as partners in Unified Sports®, if they otherwise meet the separate eligibility requirements for participation in Unified Sports® set forth in the Sports Rules.

ATHLETE ELIGIBILITY

(continued)

6. **Preserving Flexibility in Identifying Eligible Athletes.** An Accredited Program may request limited permission from SOI to depart from the eligibility requirements specified above if the Accredited Program believes that there are exceptional circumstances that warrant such a departure and so notifies SOI in writing. SOI will consider such requests promptly, but shall have the final authority to determine whether any departure or exception is appropriate.

7. **Multiple Handicaps.** Persons who have multiple handicaps may participate in Special Olympics provided they are eligible under this Section L.