We believe in the power of sport

Special Olympics represents more than 3.75 million athletes in 175 countries, and is the only organization in the world that utilizes the unique benefits of sports to improve the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Special Olympics Delaware (SODE) has been serving people with intellectual disabilities in our state for more than 40 years and uses sports as a platform to create life-changing experiences for those involved or touched by our program. SODE is made up of over 3,500 athletes participating in over 100 statewide programs. We offer community-based programs in five geographical areas: Wilmington, Newark, MOT, Kent and Sussex. School-based programs for Special Olympics athletes ages 2 and older are also offered in more than 90 schools statewide. There is no upper age limit, and athletes may be involved in both school-based and community-based programs to maximize their sports involvement.

Special Olympics Delaware continues to grow thanks to the financial support from individuals and families, businesses, civic organizations and corporate sponsors. There is no fee to participate and uniforms are provided. In rare instances, a facility fee for the sport may apply.
Athlete Eligibility

To be eligible to participate in Special Olympics Delaware, a person must meet the following criteria:

- Be at least 2 years old to participate in Young Athletes (ages 2-7) or be at least 8 years old to compete in traditional Special Olympics Delaware sports programs.
- Be identified by an agency or professional as having an intellectual disability or cognitive delay as determined by standardized measures such as intelligence quotient (IQ) or other generally acceptable measures; or a closely related developmental disability.
- Agree to abide by the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules and the SODE Code of Conduct.

Every athlete age 8 and older who is participating in traditional Special Olympics is also required to have a medical form signed by a physician or other certified medical professional. Athletes may not train or compete unless this form has been submitted to SODE. Once the medical release form is submitted, the form is good for 3 years. Young Athletes ages 2-7 do not need a physical to participate.

SODE OFFERS 20 SPORTS YEAR-ROUND

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★ Also offered as Unified Sports
❖ Much of training occurs during summer months

For further details on our sports programs, please visit www.sode.org
Our sports program

Special Olympics Delaware offers year-round sports training and athletic competition in 20 Olympic-type sports to children and adults with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. Athletes may compete in team and individual sports. Participation is open to any eligible athlete ages 2 and older, and programs are designed to serve all ability levels. Special Olympics athletes train for at least eight weeks under the guidance of trained coaches in preparation for their final competition.

In all Special Olympics sports, athletes are grouped in competition divisions according to ability level and age, and gender, when appropriate. Special Olympics Delaware also offers events for lower ability level athletes to train and compete in basic skills. The development of these key skills is necessary prior to advancing to competitive events.

▪ Team and Individual Sports

The official team and individual sports include those competition-level sports that are currently offered by Special Olympics Delaware. Special Olympics athletes train and compete in these individual or team sports with other Special Olympics athletes of similar age and performance capabilities.

▪ Individual Skills

Individual Skills competition allows Special Olympics athletes to develop sports skills in a competitive format. This program is designed to serve as a stepping stone for athletes to become a member of a team as they master skills, learn team concepts and work toward the goal of team participation. This enables every athlete to develop skills, and encourages participation and competition in an appropriate and meaningful manner.
**Unified Sports®**

Special Olympics Unified Sports® is an inclusive sports program that brings together Special Olympics athletes (individuals with disabilities) and Unified Partners (individuals without disabilities) through sports and friendship. Unified Sports promotes social inclusion through shared sport training and/or competition experiences. By providing the opportunity to participate together, Unified Sports® helps to develop increased understanding of persons with differing abilities. Unified Sports® are ideal ways for siblings and SODE athletes to become involved in Special Olympics together. Adults and other family members may also participate as a Unified Partner.

**Interscholastic Unified Sports®**

The Interscholastic Unified Sports® program is a partnership that was launched in 2013 between Special Olympics Delaware and the Delaware Interscholastic Athletic Association (DIAA) to promote Unified Sports® teams in high schools statewide, with the goal of providing opportunities for students with special needs to experience the benefits of participating in high school sports.

**Motor Activities Training Program (MATP)**

MATP is designed for people with severe disabilities whose physical and/or behavioral limitations preclude participation in team or individual sports in traditional Special Olympics competitions. Emphasis is on training and participation, rather than competition. Activities can be conducted in schools and large residential facilities, as well as in community-based settings.

**Young Athletes™ Program (YAP)**

Young Athletes program is an innovative sports play program for children ages 2-7 with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities and their peers, designed to introduce them to the world of sports. It also prepares them for Special Olympics training and competition, which begins at age 8. YAP focuses on developing motor-tracking and hand-eye coordination through physical play. The program also serves as an introduction to families, agencies and schools of the resources and support available within Special Olympics Delaware.

For more details offered on all sports and initiatives, please visit www.sode.org.
Aquatics
TRAINING SEASON: Spring
COMPETITION TIME: June (Summer Games)

Aquatics is one of the original Special Olympics sports and widely enjoyed by athletes of all ability levels and age groups. SODE offers competitions in more than 30 different aquatics events at Summer Games. Individual and relay events are offered for all strokes.

SODE also offers developmental races such as walking, flotation, assisted and unassisted events for athletes of lower abilities. In addition, SODE offers Unified relay events featuring athletes with and without disabilities competing together.

The development of basic swimming skills is necessary prior to advancing to longer, competitive events. Because it is easy to learn, aquatics is an appropriate sport for athletes of all ages and abilities.

Basketball
TRAINING SEASON: Winter
COMPETITION TIME: March/April (State Basketball Tournaments)

As one of the world’s most popular sports, basketball is a big favorite in Special Olympics. In addition to team competition, Special Olympics basketball offers individual skills and team skills competition which allows Special Olympics athletes to develop sports skills in a competitive format.

Unified teams may also train and compete in basketball. As in all Special Olympic sports, basketball teams are grouped in competition divisions according to the athletes’ and teams’ ability levels.
Bocce

TRAINING SEASON:  Spring and Fall
COMPETITION TIME:  June (Summer Games) and October (Fall Festival)

Bocce is a game of skill and strategy. Anyone who can roll a ball can play.

There are two or four players in a game. Requiring concentration, finesse, and a good eye, the sport is played on a 12’ wide by 60’ long court. Depending on the event, players take a turn rolling a bocce ball toward the smallest ball (pallina), which has already been thrown onto the field. The players are given points for the balls thrown closest to the pallina.

Doubles and foursome team competitions are offered at Summer Games and at Fall Festival.

Bowling

TRAINING SEASON:  Winter
COMPETITION TIME:  December/January (State Bowling Tournaments)

Bowling is one of the largest Special Olympics sports. Bowling competition is conducted using a traditional format; however for those of lower abilities or with physical disabilities, bowling has been modified by utilizing a ramp on the approach.

As in all Special Olympics sports, athletes are grouped into competition divisions according to ability level and age and gender when appropriate.

School- and community-based program bowling competitions take place statewide in the winter. Events include singles, Unified doubles and ramp.
Cycling

TRAINING SEASON: Summer
COMPETITION TIME: September (State Cycling Event)

Cycling is an exciting sport that tones muscles and strengthens the cardiovascular system. It is also an enjoyable recreational activity that offers fun and relaxation.

Each cyclist’s goal is to cross the finish line with the fastest time.

Cyclists train using bicycles, tricycles, or tandem bikes and then compete at the annual State Cycling Event. In Unified Sports cycling, a tandem team consists of one Special Olympics athlete and one partner — the athlete or the partner may assume either the driver position (front) or the rear position on the tandem.

Equestrian

TRAINING SEASON: Summer
COMPETITION TIME: September or October (Equestrian Competition)

Children and adults participate in area therapeutic riding programs and receive weekly lessons. A training fee for the facility may apply.

Special Olympics athletes who compete in equestrian events learn to ride, develop sports skills and gain the self confidence to direct and control a horse.

Special Olympics holds an annual Equestrian Competition which includes all the therapeutic riding programs in the state.
Figure Skating

TRAINING SEASON: Winter
COMPETITION TIME: March/April (State Figure Skating Exhibition)

Figure Skating is one of SODE’s newest sports with weekly training taking place under the direction of several highly qualified coaches.

Figure skating is a sport in which individuals perform footwork, spins and other intricate and challenging moves on ice skates. Figure skaters compete at various levels starting at the beginner’s level. Special Olympics athletes work individually to attain different badge levels, ranging from 1-12.

The figure skating season culminates in a skating exhibition at a host facility.

Flag Football

TRAINING SEASON: Fall
COMPETITION TIME: October (Fall Festival)

Flag Football is quickly becoming one of the most popular sports in Special Olympics across the United States.

Flag Football is a 5 on 5 non-contact sport played by both males and females. Statewide competitions are held in the fall during the SODE Fall Festival. Flag Football events are held in Individual Skills, Team, and Unified Team competition.
Golf

TRAINING SEASON: Summer  
COMPETITION TIME: September (State Golf Tournament)

Golf provides Special Olympics athletes the opportunity to develop their golf skills by participating in an individual skills competition. Golfers who have the ability to put all of the skills together can participate in 9-hole competition. Among Special Olympics sports, golf provides one of the greatest opportunities for athletes to train and compete with their peers and family members as a unified team.

Golfers attend clinics throughout the summer and early fall before competing at the annual State Golf Tournament. Athlete/coach clinics are also offered throughout the season.

Long-Distance Running/Walking

TRAINING SEASON: Summer  
COMPETITION TIME: SODE Fall Festival

The Long-Distance Running/Walking program is a great recreational activity and a means to condition for other sports.

The culminating long-distance running/walking event takes place at the 5K Reindeer Run and Romp, an SODE fundraiser held as part of the Winterfest in downtown Newark.
Powerlifting

TRAINING SEASON:  Spring
COMPETITION TIME:  June (Summer Games)

Powerlifting is officially one of SODE’s spring sports, but several athletes participate year-round to stay in shape. The powerlifting competition takes place at Summer Games.

Athletes (males and females ages 16 and over) may train with weights, dumbbells and machines, geared for each athlete’s capabilities.

Training facilities exist throughout the state with many of our coaches recruited from the law enforcement community.

Because of the nature of the sport, training can be extended to start in the fall.

Roller Skating

TRAINING SEASON:  Spring
COMPETITION TIME:  April/May (State Roller Skating Competition)

Roller Skating athletes race against each other in this fast-paced sport with events offered for beginner and advanced skaters. Training takes place during the spring and the State Roller Skating Competition is held at the Dover Skating Center in late April/early May.

Athletes are given the option to compete in several speed events, with a variety of distances for all skill levels, as well as relay and slalom events. In addition, athletes may choose to use in-line or quad skates, depending on their strengths.
Alpine skiing is an exciting winter sport that challenges the athlete’s downhill racing ability and coordination. Skiers train in the Pocono Mountains. The events offered are designed to accommodate a variety of skill levels and interests. Athletes compete in the downhill, slalom and giant slalom events. For each of these categories, the courses are set for advanced, intermediate or novice ability athletes.

Special Olympics Delaware athletes compete at Winter Games hosted by one of our neighboring states in the Mid-Atlantic Region.

Skiing (Alpine or “Downhill”)

TRAINING SEASON: Winter
COMPETITION TIME: February (Winter Games)

Skiing (Nordic or “Cross-country”)

TRAINING SEASON: Winter
COMPETITION TIME: February (Winter Games)

Nordic skiing is a winter sport that promotes superior physical conditioning while providing enjoyment for athletes of all ages. Skiers train locally on snow when it is available or on dry land.

Cross-country skiing is offered for athletes of every ability level. Individual events offered in cross-country skiing range from the 50-meter race to the 5K.
Snowshoeing

TRAINING SEASON: Winter
COMPETITION TIME: February (Winter Games)

Snowshoeing is one of the newest SODE winter sports. Athletes train locally on snow when it is available or on dry land. Snowshoeing is a great sport for athletes of all ages and abilities. It is very similar to athletics and provides the same excellent cardiovascular workout as cross-country skiing.

Special Olympics Snowshoeing offers events for athletes of every ability level. Individual events offered in snowshoeing range from the 25 meter races to the 800 meter.

Soccer

TRAINING SEASON: Fall
COMPETITION TIME: October (Fall Festival)

Soccer is considered the world’s most popular sport for children and adults. Similarly, it is one of the most popular sports for Special Olympics athletes. Athletes are able to improve their overall physical fitness through training and competition.

In addition to offering traditional team soccer, Special Olympics soccer offers individual skills competition to allow athletes to train and compete using basic soccer skills. These skills include dribbling, shooting, and the run and kick.
Softball

TRAINING SEASON: Spring
COMPETITION TIME: June (Summer Games)

Softball is an exciting team sport in Special Olympics. Athletes play slow-pitch softball on teams comprised of 10 members on the field. Traditional and unified softball teams compete in the Summer softball teams compete in the Summer Games tournament held in early June.

Tennis

TRAINING SEASON: Spring
COMPETITION TIME: June (Summer Games)

Widely favored by millions of people as a leisure activity, tennis is a lifetime sport Special Olympics athletes can delight in and benefit from even when not competing in an official Special Olympics competition.

Like mainstream tennis, Special Olympics tennis gives athletes the opportunity to learn and perform a variety of skills in a sport that can be played throughout life.

In addition to traditional singles and doubles events, Special Olympics Delaware offers individual skills competition, allowing athletes to train and compete in basic tennis skills.
Track and Field

TRAINING SEASON: Spring
COMPETITION TIME: June (Summer Games)

Athletics (track & field) is one of the original Special Olympics sports and is the most popular world-wide. In Delaware, athletes train during the spring months prior to the track & field event at Summer Games. Events are offered for every ability level.

Track & Field events range from the 10-meter assisted walk to the 3000-meter run to the long jump, shot put, relays and wheelchair events. Special Olympics Delaware also offers events for lower ability level athletes to train and compete in basic athletics skills.

Volleyball

TRAINING SEASON: Fall
COMPETITION TIME: October (Fall Festival)

Participating in volleyball gives SODE athletes an opportunity to learn a sport often played outside Special Olympics at picnics and other community gatherings, and thus the chance to successfully participate when those opportunities arise.

SODE offers volleyball training and competition for both traditional and unified teams.
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