

Policy: Special Olympics Maine (SOME) Athlete Eligibility Policy

Updated: October 2024

To be eligible to participate in Special Olympics, athletes must be at least 8 years old and identified by an agency or professional as having one of the following conditions: intellectual disability; a cognitive delay as determined by standardized measures such as intelligence quotient or other generally accepted measures; or a closely related developmental disability, i.e., functional limitations in both general learning and adaptive skills.

There is no maximum age limitation. The minimum age requirement for participation in Special Olympics competition is 8 years of age. For children with intellectual disabilities ages 2 through 7 there is a Young Athletes Program.

Special Olympics uses the definition of intellectual disabilities provided by the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations' specialized agency for health. According to the WHO, intellectual disability is a condition of arrested or incomplete development of the mind characterized by impairment of skills and overall intelligence in areas such as cognition, language, and motor and social abilities. Intellectual disability can occur with or without any other physical or mental disorders. Although reduced level of intellectual functioning is the characteristic feature of this disorder, the diagnosis is made only if it is associated with a diminished ability to adapt to the daily demands of the normal social environment. (Visit www.who.int for more information.)

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:

- The person has been identified by an agency or professional as having an intellectual disability as determined by their localities; or
- 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
- 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.

Persons who have multiple handicaps may participate in Special Olympics provided they are eligible as noted above.

Additional Athlete Eligibility Standards:

- Special Olympics Maine is open to all eligible participants without fee.
- Every athlete who is training and competing in Special Olympics must have valid SOME Athlete Registration Form on file in the SOME office. Every athlete in the Young Athletes Program must have a Young Athletes Registration Form on file in the SOME office. Athlete registration forms can be found at www.somaine.org/resources/athlete-resources/athlete-registration-forms/

- No Special Olympics Maine program may exclude or isolate from participation in any training or competition any athlete who is known to be a carrier of a blood-borne contagious infection or virus, or otherwise discriminate against such athletes solely because of that medical condition.
- Participation is open to all eligible athletes regardless of race, religion, gender or national origin.
- Athletes charged or convicted of a criminal offense are subject to the conditions below and [SOME's Participation Policy](#).

Crimes Not Against Another Person (Actions that do not injure or intend to injure another person)

- An athlete charged with or convicted of a misdemeanor crime that is not against another person may participate in Special Olympics Maine. However, an athlete may be placed on probation or suspended if he/she constitutes a threat to the property or well-being of others in the program.
- An athlete charged with a felony crime not against another person may participate in Special Olympics Maine pending court action. However, an athlete may be placed on probation or suspended if he/she constitutes a threat to the property or well-being of others in the program.
- An athlete convicted of a felony crime not against another person will be suspended from Special Olympics Maine for five years.

Crimes Against Another Person (Actions that injure or intend to injure another person)

- An athlete charged with a misdemeanor crime against another person may participate in the program on probationary status pending court action. However, an athlete may be suspended if he/she constitutes a threat to the property or well-being of others in the program. During the probationary period, the athlete must be accompanied by a one-on-one volunteer and cannot attend overnight events.
- An athlete convicted of a misdemeanor crime against another person will be suspended from participating in Special Olympics Maine for two years. After the two-year suspension period, the athlete may resume participation on probationary status for two years. While on probationary status:
 - The athlete must be accompanied by a one-on-one volunteer at all times.
 - The athlete may not attend overnight events.
 - The athlete may be expelled if the criminal behavior is ever replicated.
- If, in the opinion of the Board of Directors, the athlete poses a threat to others, the athlete may be expelled.
- An athlete charged with a felony crime against another person shall be suspended from Special Olympics Maine until the court has ruled on his/her guilt or until charges are dismissed.
- An athlete convicted of a felony crime against another person shall be expelled from Special Olympics Maine and may not rejoin.
- An athlete listed on a State Sex Offender Registry shall be expelled from Special Olympics Maine and may not rejoin.