



About Special Olympics New Zealand

Special Olympics is a global organization that changes lives by promoting understanding, acceptance and inclusion among people with and without intellectual disabilities. We unleash the power of the human spirit through the transformative power and joy of sports, every day around the world.

Special Olympics New Zealand is an accredited program of Special Olympics International based in New Zealand, promoting Special Olympics programs, including sports training and competitions, Healthy athletes, Young Athletes and Unified Sports.

Founded in 1968 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, Special Olympics provides people with intellectual disabilities continuing opportunities to realize their potential, develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage and experience joy and friendship.

Special Olympics New Zealand was [founded by Grant and Wendy Quinn in 1982](#)

How many people are involved in Special Olympics New Zealand?

As of 2019 over 5,000 athletes and 1,500 volunteers across 44 clubs take part in Special Olympics New Zealand programs.

How is Special Olympics different from the Paralympics?

Special Olympics and Paralympics are two separate organisations. Special Olympics provides year-round sports, sports training, and local, regional, national and international competitions for all intellectual (learning) disability levels.

The Paralympics welcomes athletes from six main disability categories: amputee, cerebral palsy, learning disability, visually impaired, spinal injuries and Les Autres (French for "the others", a category that includes conditions that do not fall into the categories previously mentioned).

To participate in the Paralympic Games, athletes have to fulfil certain criteria and meet certain qualifying standards in order to be eligible as an elite athlete. These criteria and standards are sports-specific and are determined by the IPC Sports Chairpersons, the Sports Technical Delegates and the relevant international sports organisations. The Paralympics are about elite performance sport, where athletes go through a stringent qualification process so that the best, or highest qualified based on performance, can compete at the Games.



What is Special Olympics New Zealand's vision?

Our Vision: People with intellectual disabilities in Aotearoa are valued.

Our Purpose: To enrich the lives of people with intellectual disabilities through sport.

We provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

What impact does Special Olympics have on intellectual (learning) disabled athletes?

Children and adults with intellectual (learning) disabilities who participate in Special Olympics develop improved physical fitness and motor skills, greater self-confidence and a more positive self-image. They grow mentally, socially and spiritually and, through their activities, exhibit boundless courage and enthusiasm, enjoy the rewards of friendship and ultimately discover not only new abilities and talents but "their voices" as well.

When are Special Olympics World Games held?

Special Olympics World Games are held every two years, alternating with Summer and Winter Games. The next Special Olympics World Winter Games will happen in 2022 in Kazan, Russia, followed by the Special Olympics World Games in 2023 in Berlin, Germany.

The most recent Games were the Special Olympics World Games in March 2019 in Abu Dhabi, UAE.

Who is eligible to participate in Special Olympics New Zealand?

To be eligible to participate in Special Olympics New Zealand, you must be at least 8 years old and identified by an agency or professional as having one of the following conditions: intellectual disabilities, cognitive delays as measured by formal assessment, or significant learning or vocational problems due to cognitive delay that require or have required specially designed instruction. The Special Olympics [Young Athletes™ program](#) was created for children with intellectual disabilities ages 2 through 7.

What is the Special Olympics athlete oath?

The Oath is recited by Special Olympics athletes at the start of a competition at the Opening Ceremony: "Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt."

Who leads Special Olympics New Zealand?

Rob Torrance is the Chairman of the Board and Carolyn Young is CEO of Special Olympics New Zealand

What is divisioning?

In Special Olympics competitions, athletes of all ability levels are encouraged to participate, and every athlete is recognized for his or her performance. Through a process called divisioning, Special Olympics competitions are structured so that athletes compete with other athletes of similar gender, age and ability in equitable divisions.