

ELIGIBILITY FOR SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Under the “Eligibility” section of the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules, it states that people are eligible for Special Olympics provided they meet the following criteria:

1. People age eight and above who are considered to have intellectual disability* as determined by their localities.
2. People with closely related developmental disabilities** such as those who have functional limitations, both in general learning and in adaptive skills, such as recreation, work, independent living, self-direction, or self-care.

Note: People with functional limitations based solely on a physical, behavioral, emotional, specific learning disability, or sensory disability are not eligible.

* Any person eight (8) years of age or older who is identified as having intellectual disability by an agency or a professional in any given local area is considered eligible for Special Olympics. Other terms that may be used synonymously with intellectual disability include: cognitive disabilities, mental handicaps, or mentally challenged.

** When the term “intellectual disability” or other similar description is not used to identify the person in a local area, eligibility should be determined by whether or not the person has functional limitations in both **general learning and adaptive skills**. “**Developmental disability**” is the term most often used to describe persons with both limitations. Other terms that may be used synonymously with developmental disabilities are developmental handicap, developmentally delayed, or severe disabilities.

General learning limitations refers to substantial deficits in conceptual, practical, and social intelligence that will result in performance problems in academic learning and/or general life functioning. Learning limitations may be assessed by standardized tests (such as intelligence or achievement tests) or through criterion-referenced measures (such as teacher/parent observations or actual performance samples).

Adaptive skills limitations refers to on-going performance deficits in skill areas considered essential to successful life functioning. These adaptive skills areas include: *communication, self-care, home-living, social skills, community use, self-direction, health and safety, functional academics, recreation/leisure, and work.* Adaptive skills limitations may be measured by standardized tests (such as adaptive behavior scales or checklists) or through criterion-referenced measures (such as teacher/parent observations or actual performance samples).

If a person is identified as having a developmental disability with functional limitations in both general learning and adaptive skills, it must still be determined by an agency or a professional whether or not the functional limitations are solely due to intellectual disability or a closely related developmental disability. If the functional limitations are solely due to physical disabilities, emotional disturbance, behavior disorders, specific learning disabilities, visual impairments, or sensory disabilities, this person is not eligible for Special Olympics.