



Special Olympics Young Athletes® is an inclusive early childhood sports-play program for children aged 2 to 7 years old with and without Intellectual disabilities that includes games, songs and other fun physical activities.

Our young athletes learn basic sports skills like kicking and throwing a ball and playing with others, with and without disabilities. While young athletes practice their sports skills they gain motor skills like balance, flexibility, strength and coordination.

Prior research has shown that children with developmental delays who participated in a structured 8 week Young Athletes program showed significantly more motor development than those who did not participate. Not only that, but their teachers and parents also reported improved confidence, language skills, and social skills. Another benefit was families played more together at home and in the community.

Types of Young Athletes Programs:

- **Home:** implemented at home by a parent or caregiver for an individual child or a child and siblings.
- **School Based:** implemented in a preschool, day care, or elementary school setting for a class of students by a teacher or paraprofessional.
- **Community Based:** implemented in a community setting in a park, church, school gym, etc. for members of the community by a trained volunteer.

The Young Athletes Program Offers:

- Families the chance to share in the success of their future athlete.
- An experience that will lead to an appreciation of fitness and sport for the whole family.
- Offers an inclusive program that promotes social development.
- Enables families to learn about the potential of their child through sport.

Here in Pennsylvania, we will grow Young Athletes in order to promote lifelong opportunities for inclusion and encourage fitness from an early age. Young Athletes will serve as an entry point into our sports programs, serving as a key means of recruiting the “next generation” of SOPA athletes.

We hope to offer Young Athletes programs in at least 15 local Programs by 2020 as well as offer Young Athletes exhibitions at local, invitational, sectional and/or state competitions.



Learn . Grow . Have Fun



Special Olympics
Young Athletes™

For more information, contact Manager of Athlete Leadership & Young Athletes at jschubert@specialolympicspa.org or call 610-630-9450 ext. 236.