

An individual can participate in Special Olympics if:

- They are 8 years of age or older
(5-7 year olds may participate in training programmes but can not compete)
- An agency or professional has identified them as having an intellectual disability

In New Zealand this would usually be done by

- GP / Paediatrician
- School / Special Needs Assessors
- Community Needs Assessment Agency

- The individual has a cognitive delay as determined through standardized tests used generally in New Zealand

or

- The individual has a developmental disability affecting general learning and adaptive skills in at least two of the following areas:
 - communication
 - self care
 - home living
 - social skills
 - leisure
 - health & safety
 - functional academics
 - work capabilities

A person is NOT eligible for Special Olympics if their disability is SOLELY due to physical disabilities, emotional disturbances, behaviour disorders, specific learning disabilities, psychiatric illness, or sensory disabilities