



FAQ – SPECIAL OLYMPICS SWIMMING & FCPA

Who is eligible to participate in Special Olympics?

To be eligible to participate in Special Olympics, 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. Children ages 6 –7 may participate in some training and other non-competition activities.

There is no maximum age limit for participation in Special Olympics.

What sports does Special Olympics offer?

Many! While the Fairfax County Park Authority only partners with Special Olympics to support the swimming program, there are many other sport opportunities in the community. To see all, check out the website here: <https://specialolympicsva.org/sports/our-sports>

Does an athlete have to know how to swim to join a team?

Yes, in order to join an FCPA Special Olympics swim team, an athlete must already know how to swim. Teams generally have a 1:5 coach to athlete ratio and most teams practice in water depths of 7 feet or more. Safety is our first priority and an athlete must be able to swim 25 yards (one length of the pool) safely and independently to be eligible to join a team. This is a competitive swimming program, not a learn to swim program.

How do I sign up?

Teams require pre-registration. Registration for all Fairfax County Park Authority programs including the Special Olympics swim teams is first come, first serve and completed via Parktakes. Each August, customers can register for the fall swim practice session and each November, customers can register for the combined winter/spring session. These popular programs fill up quickly and we have to limit the number of swimmers in each session due to limited pool/lap lane space, interested swimmers are encouraged to register as soon as registration opens. For details regarding Parktakes registration, visit our website here:

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes/more-ways>

Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes> and type Special Olympics into the search text box to see classes currently open for registration.

What forms do I need to complete?

Participation in Special Olympics Virginia requires athletes to obtain a physical from a medical professional and fill out the Athlete Registration, Medical, and Release Form every three years. If an athlete does not sign for themselves then a Parent/Guardian Release Form must be completed. Find the most up to date copy of the Athlete Release and Participation form on the website here: <https://specialolympicsva.org/sports/be-an-athlete>

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How much does it cost?

Competing in a Special Olympics event is free however, there is a cost associated with practices - using an indoor pool facility, reserving lap lanes, training coaches and volunteers, providing training equipment like kickboards and bouys, end of season awards, etc...Program fees are based on the number of weeks we have practice and typically run about \$12-14 a week.

Are scholarships available?

Yes, Fairfax County residents who meet the requirements [listed here](#) are eligible to receive a scholarship for one Parktakes coded class per quarter. During the competitive season (January-June) you can also submit your payment receipt to our local Special Olympics office for reimbursement.

When and where do the teams practice?

All teams practice one day a week.

Oak Marr RECenter – Sunday afternoons
3200 Jermantown Road Oakton, VA. 22124

Spring Hill RECenter – Saturday afternoons
1239 Spring Hill Road McLean, VA. 22102

Audrey Moore RECenter – Saturday afternoons
8100 Braddock Road Annandale, VA. 22003

Lee District RECenter – Saturday afternoons
6601 Telegraph Road Franconia, VA. 22310

My athlete is not 8 years old or does not know how to swim yet, how can I help them prepare?

Fairfax County Park Authority offers several adapted aquatics learn to swim classes year-round. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes> and filter a search by selecting *Adapted Recreation Services* under program category and also filter out age to see current programs being offered. Practice, Practice, Practice – just like learning to read or ride a bike consistent practice makes movements and skills permanent!

Still have questions about Special Olympics swimming in Fairfax County!?

Call 703.324.8565 😊