



Special Olympics Oklahoma

Language Guidelines – PLEASE READ

Words can open doors, enabling persons with intellectual disabilities to lead fuller, more independent lives. Words can also create barriers to stereotypes that are not only demeaning, but which also rob persons with intellectual disabilities of their individuality. Special Olympics is creating an inclusive world, where we focus on abilities, not disabilities. The following language guidelines have been developed by experts for use by anyone writing or speaking about persons with intellectual disabilities, ensuring that all people are portrayed with individuality and dignity.

Appropriate Terminology

- Individuals, persons or people **with** intellectual disabilities.
- A person **uses a wheelchair**, rather than confined or restricted.
- Special Olympics athletes (not Olympians) are a minimum age of 8, with no maximum age. Distinguish **adults** or **children**, not kids.
- **Down Syndrome** has replaced “Down’s Syndrome.”
- Refer to all participants as **Special Olympics athlete(s)**, not Special Olympians, or the Special Olympics athletes.
- Always use **Special Olympics Oklahoma**.

Terminology to Avoid

- Special Olympics is a program promoting **inclusion**. **Please refrain from using any type of language such as: retarded, mentally retarded, or mental retardation.**
- Do not use the label kids or children. Adults are a large part of our program.
- It’s not just Winter Games and Summer Games. Special Olympics is a **year-round program of sports training and athletic competition, where we offer over 175 events annually.**
- Do not use the word “the” in front of Special Olympics Oklahoma unless describing a specific event or official.
- Do not say Special Olympics **"of"** Oklahoma.
- Do not use the word “Olympian” as it is licensed by the International Olympic Committee and should not be used to describe Special Olympics athletes.