



PROSPECTIVE EXAMINATION OF SPECIAL OLYMPICS SPORT RETENTION IN ONTARIO

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WHAT WE DID

- We examined the factors that led Canadian youth with intellectual disabilities to get involved and stay involved in sport through the Special Olympics.
- To do this, we surveyed parents of Special Olympics athletes in 2012 and then examined who was registered as an active athlete in 2015. We compared athletes who were active in 2015 to those who were not active in 2015 based on their original survey responses.

WHAT WE FOUND

- Around 10% of athletes from 2012 were no longer registered in 2015.
- Compared to active athletes, inactive athletes participated less in non-sport Special Olympics events (such as parties or dinners) and participated less frequently in sport
- Inactive athletes also had lower levels of positive sport experiences and coach-athlete relationship scores, and less access to resources to enable their participation in sport.
- Active and inactive athletes did not differ with respect to clinical characteristics, level of ability, demographics, or social and community participation outside of Special Olympics.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Participant retention in Special Olympics programming is related to **relationship quality** (including with friends and coaches), **participation in sport and non-sport events**, and **access to resources**.
- Strategies to enhance the **retention** of athletes with intellectual disabilities include:
 - Ensure athletes have the resources and support they need to participate.
 - Make the sports experience enjoyable and fulfilling
 - Educate coaches on how to develop positive relationships with athletes

