

# Special Olympics Healthy Hearing



Healthy Hearing is changing lives in communities across the globe by providing free hearing screenings and other medical services, including ear wax removal, swim molds, hearing aid maintenance and minor repairs for people with intellectual disabilities. **The amount of ear problems and hearing loss among Special Olympics athletes is greater than that found in the general population.** Most athletes' hearing problems are previously undetected, un-served or under-treated. Hearing loss negatively impacts communication ability, quality of life, social interactions and health.

## Criteria for Clinical Directors:

Individuals interested in acting as a Clinical Director for Healthy Hearing events should have the following qualifications and skills:

- Properly certified Audiologist or Speech - Language Pathologist
- Ability to work with local program to determine event opportunities
- Recruit and train volunteer health professionals
- Obtain equipment, supplies, and athlete giveaways
- Set up and supervise Healthy Athletes venue
- Collect and report data

## Contact:

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## Purpose of the Screening :

- Increase access to hearing care for Special Olympics athletes, as well as all individuals with intellectual disabilities
- Identify permanent hearing loss and provide referral for follow-up care
- Identify medical issues causing hearing loss and refer to the appropriate medical professional for follow-up
- Raise audiologists' awareness of the hearing concerns of people with special needs, including the difficulties involved in diagnosing and accessing treatment options
- Provide educational and clinical opportunities for students training in the field of Speech Language Pathology and Audiology
- Develop a body of knowledge about ear canal hygiene of children and adults with special needs
- Educate athletes about ways to prevent hearing loss from noise exposure

## Importance and Impact:

Healthy Hearing screenings indicate a large percentage of Special Olympics athletes have untreated ear and hearing conditions.

Out of Special Olympics New Jersey athletes screened:

- **39.1%** have blocked or partially blocked ear canals
- **31.8%** have failed the PureTone Hearing Test
- **15.1%** have possible middle ear problems
- **10.2%** have permanent hearing loss

