



Special Smiles is the dental health discipline of Special Olympics Healthy Athletes® that provides athletes with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to take charge of their oral health. **Special Smiles provides comprehensive oral health care information, offers free dental screenings and instructions on correct brushing and flossing techniques to Special Olympics athletes.** This also includes issuing preventative supplies, like toothpaste, toothbrushes and fluoride varnish.

Importance and Impact:

Special Smiles screenings indicate a large percentage of Special Olympics athletes are unaware of the condition of their oral health.

Out of SONJ athletes screened:

- **45.6%** have signs of gingivitis
- **16.8%** have missing teeth
- **10.2%** have untreated tooth decay
- **6.9%** have mouth pain
- **4.6%** are in need of urgent care

Criteria for Clinical Directors:

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

- Licensed Dentist or Dental Hygienist
- Ability to work with local program to determine event opportunities and evaluate programming
- Recruit and train volunteer health professionals
- Obtain equipment, supplies, and athlete giveaways
- Set up and supervise Healthy Athletes venue
- Collect and report data

Purpose of the Screening:

Special Smiles is an event designed to:

- Increase access to dental care for Special Olympics athletes, as well as people with intellectual disabilities
- Raise dental professionals' awareness of the oral health concerns of people with special needs, including difficulties involved in accessing care
- Develop a body of knowledge about the oral health care needs of children and adults with disabilities

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