



Special Olympics New Jersey ATHLETE CONGRESS

The **Athlete Congress** includes Special Olympics New Jersey athletes who are elected to represent the Special Olympics athletes of New Jersey. These Members of Athlete Congress are empowered to be the voice of the athletes and present their ideas and recommendations to effect positive change to various facets of the year-round sports training, athletic competitions and other Special Olympics New Jersey activities.

They are representative of South, Central and Northern New Jersey. Members have competed in Special Olympics for five years with at least two years of chapter level participation in New Jersey, are involved in multiple sports training and competitions during the year. The Congress meets six times during the year and Members shall attend and actively participate in every meeting.

Every year in the Fall, the Athlete Congress meets at the New Jersey State House to vote on recommendations for changes to the Special Olympics program that they have formed, reviewed, and discussed during the previous meetings. For the recommendations that are passed, the Congress Members create action plans and submit these recommendations and plans to the Special Olympics New Jersey staff and Board of Directors.

The Athlete Congress Members are nominated by area directors, coaches or LTP (local training program) coordinators. Their applications are reviewed for adherence to the evaluation criteria established in the By-Laws of the Athlete Congress of Special Olympics New Jersey. Their candidacy is voted on by the current Members. The selected Members serve for one five-year term.

To assist the Members, several Athlete Congress Facilitators are selected from the ranks of Special Olympics area directors, coaches, athletes, and family members. The facilitators assist the members during meetings by supporting and encouraging open discussion and providing explanations when requested that will help members understand the issues and voting process. To be considered for position of facilitator, the process is similar to the application process for an athlete who would like to be a member of the Athlete Congress.