

# Problem Statement: Professional Associations



Special Olympics  
**Health**  
MADE  
POSSIBLE BY **Golisano**

## ISSUE STATEMENT

People with intellectual disabilities experience significant health disparities compared to people without disabilities. Barriers causing these disparities include delayed care because of cost and uninformed medical care, limited exercise and health promotion opportunities, and routine exclusion from community health planning initiatives.

Yet, many professional associations and their individual members fail to include people with intellectual disabilities in their policy statements, education and training, membership efforts, and programming. This continues the cycle of exclusion and exacerbates the health disparities people with intellectual disabilities experience.

## THE VISION

Every professional association is committed to addressing the health needs of children and adults with intellectual disabilities, their members receive academic training and continuing education on working with people with intellectual disabilities, and professional associations work together and work with disability organizations to end health disparities faced by people with intellectual disabilities.

## HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE THE SOLUTION

Professional associations can begin by adopting a resolution or policy statement identifying the importance of addressing health disparities experienced by children and adults with intellectual disabilities, by providing education and training to their members on disability and health topics, and by providing guidance to their individual members for how to advocate for the full inclusion of persons with intellectual disabilities in their fields.

Professional associations also can advocate for curricular changes in academic training programs to include inclusive health practices and community health planning for people with intellectual disabilities and encourage other professional associations to focus on the health of people with intellectual disabilities. One step to take towards the solution is to form a task force focused on the best way to include people with intellectual disabilities within the services offered by your organization. Another step is to partner with disability organizations to help understand how your organization can better include people with intellectual disabilities in your work.