



The Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness Social Connectedness Fellowship Application Research Project #9 - Special Olympics

The Social Connectedness Fellowship provides students and recent graduates with the opportunity to carry out research, writing, analysis, and outreach related to overcoming social isolation and building social connectedness. Fellows are paired with partner organizations that work to build belonging and social inclusion across a variety of thematic areas—climate change, disability and older people’s rights, refugee integration, inclusive education, placemaking and urban design, and much more.

Project Details:

Partner: [Special Olympics Inc.](https://www.specialolympics.org/) (SOI) is an international non-profit organization providing sports training and competition to over 5 million people with intellectual disabilities (ID) in 193 countries. With the support of almost 1.5 million coaches and volunteers, Special Olympics delivers 33 Olympic-type sports and more than 108,000 games and competitions throughout the year. Beyond sports programming, Special Olympics offers programs and resources to improve health for people with ID and their families.

Location of Fellow: Remote

Project Description:

Are you interested in conducting an inclusive research project that focuses on health, families and social connectedness?

The purpose of this research project is to help Special Olympics understand how athletes with ID and their families (parents, siblings, and other family members)



have been able to maintain their health and wellbeing together during COVID-19 when there were no in-person activities. When the pandemic began, Special Olympics developed a broad range of resources that athletes and their families can use at home in order to stay active, eat healthy, and maintain overall wellbeing. Special Olympics wants to understand if and how families have used SOI resources, any lifestyle changes families have made, and how they have stayed connected during this time.

Special Olympics is also interested in expanding research that is inclusive of athletes with ID by providing them with opportunities to be involved in the research process from start to finish. For this project SOI will involve two Special Olympics Health Messengers – athletes with intellectual disabilities who have been trained to serve as health and wellness leaders, educators, advocates, and role models within their Special Olympics Community or the community at large.

As part of this project, the Social Connectedness Fellow would be responsible for collaborating with the Health Messengers on the design of the interview/survey, assisting with data collection, and sharing the findings to the larger Special Olympics community and the community at large.

Previous experience with people with intellectual or developmental disabilities is preferred but not required

Key Deliverables:

- 2 blog articles
- Development of survey and interview protocol (in collaboration with Health Messenger and Special Olympics Team)
- Analysis of survey and interview data (with support from the research lead)
- Final report, along with an accessible infographic highlighting key findings



Key Skills/Competencies Required:

- Education background in psychology, social sciences or related field, or equivalent work/life experiences.
- Some knowledge of or interest in disability inclusion and non-profits.
- Cultural sensitivity—mindful of challenges facing marginalized populations.
- Exceptional communication and organizational skills.
- Detail-oriented, flexible, excellent time management skills, and the ability to work independently to complete projects in a timely fashion.
- Basic computer skills, including proficiency in email, internet research and Microsoft Office.
- Creative thinker with a genuine curiosity and investigative sensibility.
- Prior experience working with people with ID or Special Olympics is an asset.

How to Apply:

All applicants must fill out the [Google Form application](#) by March 7, 2021 at 11:59 pm EST. Applicants can apply for 1 or 2 projects. In addition to answering the standardized questions, applicants must also answer a specific question for each project that they are interested in. Specific question for Research Project #9 - Special Olympics International:

1. What does inclusion mean to you and how would you approach inclusion within this Fellowship research project? (Max 250 words)