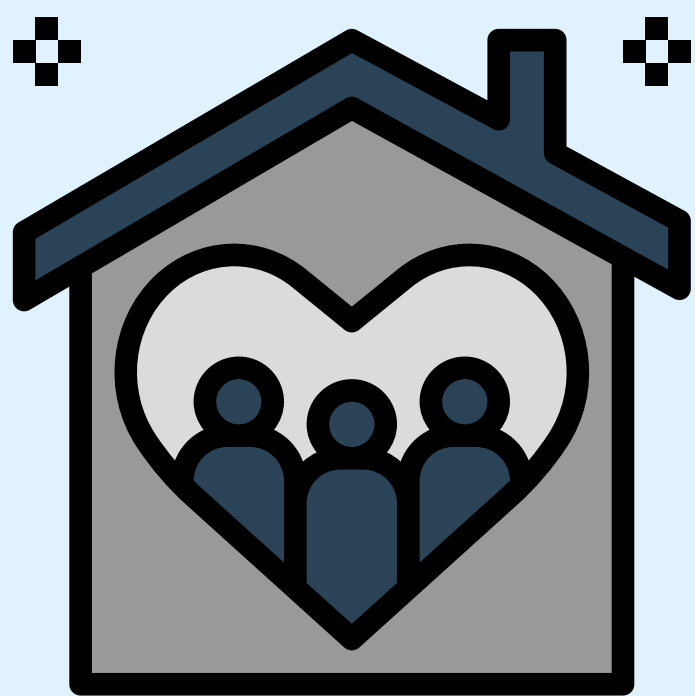


# Self-Determination, Social Connectedness, & Health at Home

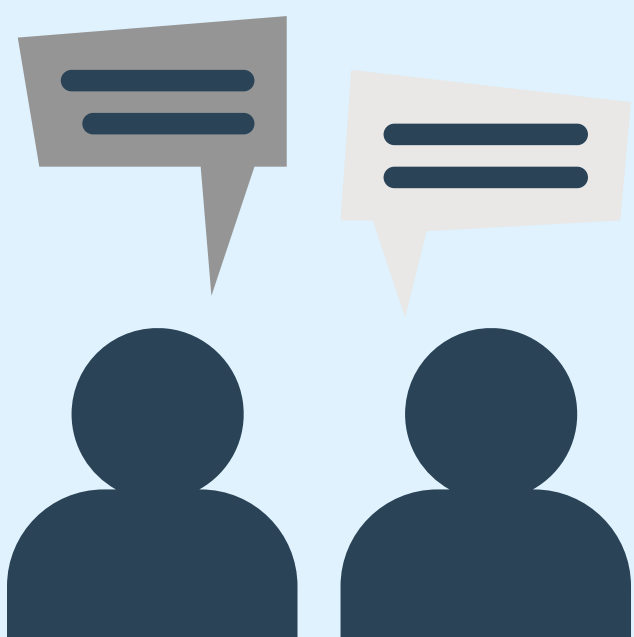
An Examination of Special Olympics Athletes and Their Families' Experiences During the COVID-19 Pandemic



**What?** We researched the health, wellbeing, and social connectedness of Special Olympics athletes and their families during the COVID-19 pandemic, when there were no in-person activities



**How?** We interviewed five athletes and five parents to understand their experiences



**How?** Athletes and parents participated in three interviews:

Interview one: athlete & family

Interview two: athlete

Interview three: family

**What did we learn?** During interviews, athletes and parents shared valuable insights and stories. These were the four main points that came from the interviews:

1

Athlete leaders maintained their motivation better than athletes without added responsibilities

2

Family members positively or negatively influenced the athlete's ability to act on their health motivations

3

Athletes and their families who were motivated and had positive home lives before the COVID-19 pandemic were able to succeed while using online resources

4

Athletes and their families appreciated the global social connectedness cultivated by online resources

**What do we recommend?** Based on these four points, we came up with four key recommendations for Special Olympics International:

1

Offer additional health training without the responsibility of becoming a Health Messenger for athletes who want to learn new skills without the pressure of taking on a leadership role

2

Create a support network that matches community leaders and parents who have time and energy to athletes who need additional assistance at home

3

Launch a study that has the resources to interview athletes and their families who did not have access to the internet or computers during the pandemic

4

Maintain and expand the global online community that was created during the use of online resources

For more information, please see the full report by  
Adrianna Vanos