

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE: EXPERIENCES OF SPECIAL OLYMPICS FAMILIES IN ADVOCACY FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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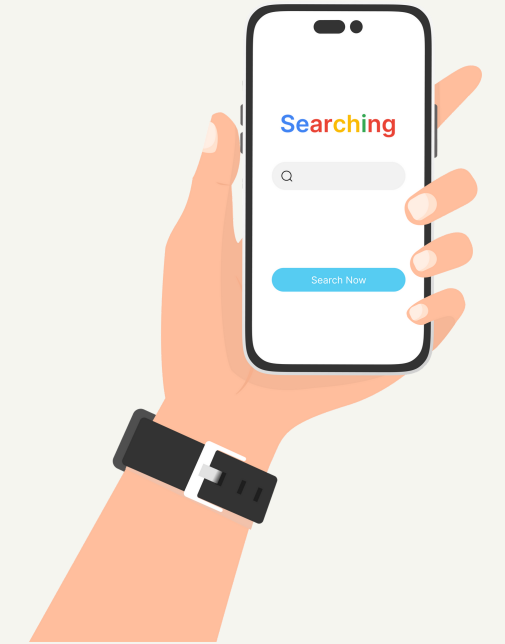


# OUR CEI INITIATIVE

We sent out a Google Form to Special Olympics families who had engaged with inclusive education.

It gave families the option to answer a few questions in a:

- Survey
- Interview
- Video



## Who was it for?

Special Olympics family members in North America, Europe and Latin America.



## When did we do it?

July and August 2023



## Who helped us?

The survey and call for interviewees was sent out through Special Olympics Regional Offices.



**Special  
Olympics**

# GOAL: WHAT DID WE WANT TO LEARN?

We wanted to understand how Special Olympics families have experienced education, and when they have had to fight for it.

We also wanted to understand if Special Olympics know what advocacy is, and if they have done it before.

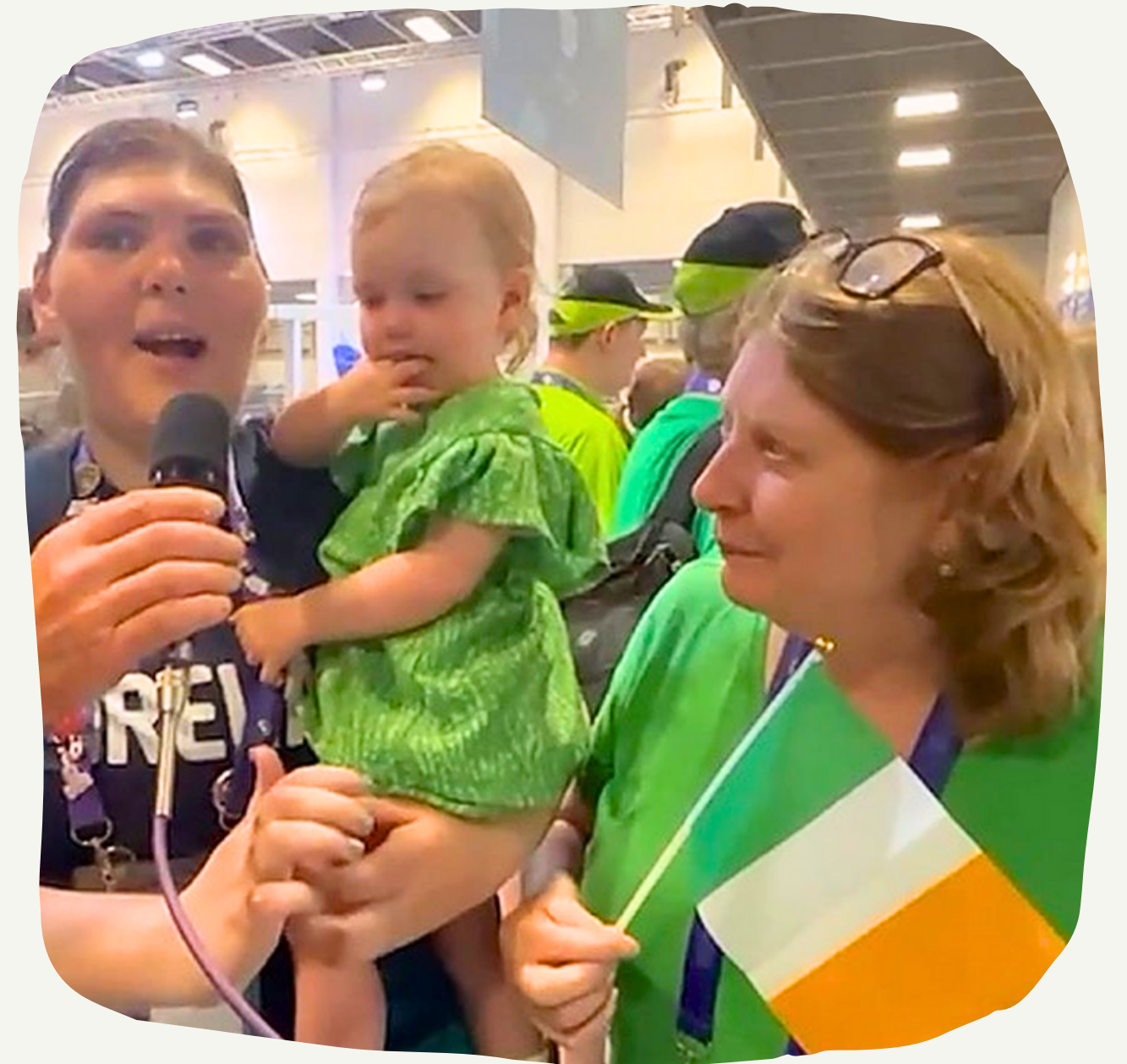
This would help us learn:

- If Special Olympics families are going through the same things that other organizations have reported
- How Special Olympics can be most helpful to families



# WHY DID WE WANT TO LEARN IN THIS WAY?

We wanted to do this using a survey and interviews to **highlight the voices of Special Olympics families.**



This is co-author Margaret and her family!

# HOW DID WE FIND OUR INFORMATION?

## STEP 1

We created a survey with 18 questions and the option to answer in an interview.

The survey would show you different questions based on your answers.

For example, if you had never advocated, it would ask you why. If you had, it would ask you how.



## STEP 2

We made two versions of the survey:

- 1 in Spanish for Latin America
- 1 in English for North America and Europe

The Special Olympics regional coordinators sent out the surveys by email.



## STEP 3

Once we had the answers, we put them all together. We interviewed 4 people.

Then, we analyzed the results together.

This means we looked at them carefully and compared them with what we already knew.



# PEOPLE WHO ANSWERED OUR CALL

**39** people answered the survey

**27 people**

only answered the survey



**7 people**

answered the survey and wanted to be interviewed



**5**

only wanted to be interviewed



# HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR FINDINGS

- Most family members had been able to put their children into inclusive education (*14 people*), or a combination of segregated and inclusive education (*4 people*).
- Unlike what we thought, 22 people found it **easy** to put their family member in education. Only 7 people found it hard.
- The people who found it hard told us that it had to do with principals and teachers not wanting students with disabilities in their schools.





# HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR FINDINGS

## A story from someone who had to advocate for access to education:

"When I enrolled my son at age 5 in the regular school there were many problems, mainly with the speech therapist, where she did not agree that he should attend there. They wanted to deny the enrollment and I had to go to the Regional [Education Directorate] where there is special education counseling, in those days the director also visited the counseling where they explained to her that **they could NOT deny the enrollment for my son.**"



# HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR FINDINGS

- We were delighted to find that more than half of family members (*18 people*) actually know what advocacy means.
- After we explained what advocacy means to everyone, **23 people** shared that they have advocated for inclusive education before.
- So, there were some people who had advocated, but didn't know the word!
- **4 people** told us they had **not** advocated before, because they didn't know what advocacy is or felt they did not have the skills for it.



# HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR FINDINGS

## A story from someone who advocated with support from the community:

“At the time when we needed to get a learning support educator to help him we belonged to a group in Malta, which helps the families of persons with special needs. And that group apart from offering certain services (...) they helped us both to apply for a learning support educator. So they helped us to apply. They came with us for the interviews, etc.

And then also, they used to come with us at school, when we had the meetings with the school and with the LSE etcetera. So yes, we did have the support at the time from this group.”



# CONCLUSIONS

WHAT WE THOUGHT	WHAT WE FOUND
<p>Special Olympics families are already doing advocacy, but they do not know this word.</p>	<p><b>True!</b> A lot of families (13 families) told us they don't know what advocacy means. But they also told stories of how they had worked to get their child into a school - that's advocacy already!</p>
<p>Special Olympics families are advocating to get their children into inclusive schools.</p>	<p><b>True!</b> Family members shared with us that they had advocated to get their children into schools by working with school teachers and headmasters, as well as with the local government.</p>
<p>Special Olympics families are advocating for their children to get the best possible education in schools.</p>	<p><b>True!</b> Most family members are communicating a lot with learning support assistants. That is also a type of advocacy. And in our interviews, we talked a lot about how you have to keep asking the school to make changes to make sure everyone gets a good education.</p>
<p>Special Olympics families are not participating in systems advocacy.</p>	<p><b>We're not sure!</b> Nobody talked about this in our interviews or survey. But we also did not ask them directly. So we don't have enough information to conclude.</p>