

UMMS and Special Olympics of Massachusetts Partnership

In December 2008, UMass Medical School and Special Olympics of Massachusetts (SOMA) entered into a partnership with a mutual goal to improve health care access and quality for individuals with intellectual disabilities. When approached by Special Olympics of Massachusetts President and CEO Robert Johnson was seeking health care professionals from UMMS to volunteer in a variety of capacities. “We are transforming ourselves from a sports organization into a health organization,” explained Mr. Johnson. UMMS Chancellor Dr. Michael Collins agreed immediately and this unique relationship was forged.

As part of the agreement, UMMS:

- Participates as a member of the SOMA Honorary Board of Directors
- Assists SOMA in recruiting volunteer clinicians to assist in various SOMA activities including: providing health screening for athletes at SOMA events and (2) developing SOMA Health Promotion Teams;
- Assists SOMA in recruiting volunteers to assist at various SOMA events, including the Winter Games hosted in the Worcester area;
- Assists SOMA in developing training for medical professionals geared toward improving knowledge and acceptance of the intellectually disabled;
- Assists SOMA in developing training for medical professionals geared toward improving knowledge and acceptance of the intellectually disabled;
- Assists SOMA in the development of online coaches training for the Healthy Athlete programs.

The Office of Program Development at UMMS Commonwealth Medicine provides project management support and coordination to ensure that identified initiatives are progressing according to requirements and schedules.

As a result:

- We have Recruited UMMS staff to volunteer at SOMA events;
- The UMMS Graduate School of Nursing (GSN) provided students and faculty to perform Health Athletes screening at the March 2010 Winter Games;
- GSN staff is receiving specialized training for staff ;
- Developed a SOMA Coaches Corner website to improve online coaches training;
- In the process of assisting SOMA in developing training for medical professionals geared toward improving knowledge and acceptance of the intellectually disabled.