



INCLUSIVE RECREATION

Based on the information presented by Stuart Schleien, Cynthia Burkhour and Al Mead

Recreation: The Spirit of Life!

Recreation improves the quality of our lives! "Doing it" makes us feel good! "It" can be active or passive; risky or safe; noisy or quiet; together or alone; inside or outside;... We get to choose what we do! There is value in all aspects of the experience, the sights, sounds, touches, tastes, smells and sensations of "doing it."

Everyone benefits from recreation. Many times, attitudes, inaccessible environments, and a limited understanding of the possibilities can prevent people with disabilities from being included and reaping the usual benefits of recreation participation. If recreation is such an important part of life why aren't people with disabilities given the same opportunities and choices?

"Zero Exclusion"

The goal is full participation and natural proportions of people with and without disabilities. Inclusive recreation opportunities are those that are equally available to anyone who wishes to participate, The following excerpt from *Community Recreation and People with Disabilities: Strategies for Inclusion* by Schleien, Ray, and Green provides a basis for inclusive recreation:

"Inclusive leisure service options should be the ultimate goal of all recreation personnel and programs. Participants with disabilities should come to understand that access to community leisure settings and programs is possible and can be achieved without difficulty and with the full support of leisure providers and the community as a whole. People with disabilities should be considered "participants" not "the handicapped." Therefore, they are entitled to the same respect and attention afforded any other member of the community when recreation programming is being planned, designed, and implemented."

Endless Choices

Gardening
Dancing lessons
Movies
Museum programs
Acting classes
Little League
Soccer team
Bowling leagues
Music concerts
Computer classes
Swimming
Craft classes
Pottery
Music lessons
Ice skating
Snow skiing
Hiking
Camping
Fishing
Tennis
Volunteering
Golf
Horseback Riding
Flying lessons
Spectator sports
Water skiing
Boating
Kayaking
Canoeing
Photography
Art classes
Running
Aerobics
Walking
Softball leagues

Recreation Doesn't Have to be "Special"

Too often people with disabilities and their families don't take advantage of the choices they have when it comes to recreation. "Special" recreation has been the status quo and people tend to forget about the multiple options available to community members when only "special" programs are encouraged.

In many cases people with disabilities are kept in segregated programs because they are judged not to be ready to participate in general activities. But segregated or "special" programs are often intended to be a "steppingstone," not the only program available to people with disabilities, unless by choice.

What Are Inclusive Recreation Opportunities?

- ? Opportunities which ensure that ALL people feel they are valued and truly welcome, able to participate in any recreation activity they choose.
- ? Programs and services that provide a variety of options to meet different needs.
- ? Settings and programs that bring people with different abilities together and promote and encourage understanding, respect, and friendships.
- ? Staff and volunteers that provide necessary support for recreation experiences.
- ? Facilities and spaces that are accessible and easy to use by everyone.

The concept of inclusive recreation is based on providing necessary individual adaptations, accommodations, and supports so every person can benefit equally from a typical recreation experience in the community. Inclusion benefits all participants and allows opportunities for friendship development and mutual understanding of differences.

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Advocating for Inclusive Recreation

In many situations, people with disabilities and family members find themselves “fighting the system” when seeking recreation opportunities in the community. Knowing your rights and the facts when approaching a recreation provider is the first step toward inclusion.

The Americans with Disabilities Act is a piece of legislation that acknowledges the civil rights of people with disabilities, including the right to recreation access. The ADA applies to both the public and private sector and requires both physical and programmatic access for individuals with disabilities. This impacts recreation settings in the following ways:

- ? Physical barriers must be removed when readily achievable.
- ? If a physical barrier cannot be removed, it may be acceptable to move the activity to a more accessible location.
- ? A recreation agency might need to provide auxiliary aid or services to an individual with a disability such as sign language interpreter or additional staff.
- ? Access to all programs must be provided. “Special “ programs cannot substitute for “regular” programs if inclusive opportunities are desired.

Paralympic athlete, Al Mead described his efforts for inclusive recreation as a “relentless effort.” He stated that the desires and dreams for recreation have to be greater than the challenges and sometimes you have to help people find their vision and goals. For Al Mead, adaptive equipment, a prosthesis, made recreation accessible. There are many ways to make recreation activities more accessible and inclusive for people with differing abilities.

The following list provides some ideas:

- ? Modify the rules
- ? Alter the regulations for admittance or participation
- ? Provide adaptive equipment if necessary
- ? Make sure the physical environment is accessible
- ? Provide natural supports
- ? Consider how success is defined



Resources on Inclusive Recreation

Access Recreation Group

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2454 Lamplighter drive
Jenison, MI 49428
616-669-9109

Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies' Center for Recreation and Disability Studies

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Campus Box 3185, Evergreen House
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3185
919-966-1222

Institute for Community Integration

University of Minnesota
106 Pattee Hall
150 Pillsbury Drive SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455
612-626-7720
www.ici.coled.umn.edu/ici

National Center on Physical Activity and Disability

Dept. of Disability and Human Dev.
University of Illinois at Chicago
1640 West Roosevelt Road
Chicago, IL 60608-6904
800- 900-8086
www.ncpad.org

Community Recreation and People with Disabilities: Strategies for Inclusion

Paul Brooks Publishing
P.O. Box 10624
Baltimore, MD 21285-0624
800-638-3775

Don't Forget the Fun

Institute for Community Inclusion

Children's Hospital
300 Longwood Ave.
Boston, MA 02155
617-355-6506
www.childrenshospital.org/ici

National Center on Accessibility

Indiana University
2805 East 10th Street, Suite 190
Bloomington, IN 47408-2698
812-856-4422
www.ncaonline.org

North Carolina Office on Disability and Health

Frank Porter Graham Center
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Campus Box 8185
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-8185
919-966-0868
www.fpg.unc.edu/~ncodh

Recreation Access Project Partnerships for Assistive Technology

919-872-2298
www.pat.org/RAP