



Partners for
Youth with Disabilities

DISABILITY INCLUSION TIPS FOR YOUTH SPORTS & RECREATION PROGRAMS



Ensure your office is accessible, as well as your recreation and fitness space. If it is not, determine what changes need to be made to [improve the accessibility](#).



Reflect on transportation options to and from your office and recreation space. If accessible [transportation options](#) are not available, consider what steps need to be made to prioritize access.



[Develop partnerships](#) with organizations and agencies serving people with disabilities for outreach and recruitment purposes.



Early in the intake process, ask all participants to list any [reasonable accommodations](#) they may need. This should be a question on any application or intake paperwork you use.



In addition, inquire about food allergies or restrictions. Based on responses, consider specific [adaptive equipment](#) participants may need and purchase/borrow in advance.



Make considering the needs and challenges of your participants an ongoing part of your program evaluation. Challenge yourself to move beyond the basics and create an [engaging experience](#) for all.



Review your marketing materials and include images of [people with disabilities](#) having fun in activities throughout your brochures, videos, and other collateral.



Focus on what an individual can contribute and what the program can bring to the individual. Use [positive reinforcement](#) liberally and actively notice/name the strengths of youth participants.



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Before helping a person with a disability, ask them if they need assistance. Often, a person with a disability can tell you how [best to help them](#).



Review rules, regulations, policies, and procedures to ensure there are not [unintended barriers](#) for participants with disabilities.



Identify a low-stimulus area within the site that can be used as a space to [cool down](#) if youth need a break.



Use a [strength-based approach](#) during your intake process by asking questions such as, “What do you enjoy doing in your free time?” or, “What would you like to teach others?”



Make [professional development](#) around disability inclusion a priority for staff and volunteers. Recruit volunteers and staff with a variety of abilities and disabilities.



Have a visual schedule of activities posted. Have a timer available to help with transitions from one activity to the next. Create [alternative formats](#) when needed and have all materials available electronically. Use Universal Design for Learning when planning each activity by offering multiples forms of:

- ✓ **Presentation:** videos, print materials, verbal instructions, physical demonstrations, etc.
- ✓ **Engagement:** playing a game, learning a new skill, being part of a team, etc.
- ✓ **Expression:** demonstrating a new skill, practicing a drill, following game rules, etc.



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DISABILITY INCLUSION CHECKLIST FOR YOUTH SPORTS & RECREATION PROGRAMS

1

ACCESSIBILITY

- Assess & adapt office environment, recreation space, and transportation options for accessibility
- Ask participants to list any reasonable accommodations needed on all paperwork, including food allergies or needs
- Purchase or borrow needed adaptive equipment

2

CREATIVITY & FLEXIBILITY

- Focus on what an individual can contribute and what the program can bring to the individual
- Use positive reinforcement liberally and actively notice/name the strengths of youth participants
- Have a timer available to help with transitions from one activity to the next

3

COMMUNICATION

- Create and display a visual schedule for your program
- Have all materials used in your program available in alternative formats
- Use a strength-based approach during your intake process
- Use Universal Design for Learning when planning each activity
- Include empowering photos of people with disabilities in your marketing materials

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ORGANIZATIONAL POLICIES

- Ensure rules, regulations, and policies do not create unintended barriers for participants
- Develop partnerships with organizations and agencies serving people with disabilities
- Move beyond providing just the basics to create an engaging and comfortable experience for all

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DEVELOPING SOCIAL SKILLS

- Teach all participants basic disability etiquette, such as asking a person with a disability if they need assistance before stepping in to help
- Identify a low-stimulus area that can be used as a space to cool down if youth need a break

6

HUMAN RESOURCES

- Make professional development around disability inclusion a priority for staff and volunteers
- Recruit volunteers and staff with a variety of abilities and disabilities