

MORE THAN YOU THINK

STEPS to INCLUSION

A recipe of inclusive recreation programming practices to facilitate participation of people with disabilities.



Inclusion is a process

While many factors influence inclusion, the STEPS to INCLUSION process focuses on the aspect of staff. The following questions outline a process and practice that support the “assess needs” of program planning. They also guide staff through the steps of planning ahead to implement an inclusive program.

Inclusion matters

It makes a difference for people with disabilities and their families. Moreover, Recreation staff need a framework to make inclusion work.

The City of Calgary provides inclusive programs and services for all regardless of diverse needs due to physical, mental, cultural, racial, social, economic, gender and age differences. With the diverse nature of participants in programs, it is imperative for recreation staff to follow a philosophy of inclusion and take a proactive approach to including all individuals. The STEPS to INCLUSION is a recipe of practices for including individuals with disabilities in recreation programs to ensure successful and safe participation of all. It provides a process of questions that will guide staff through the steps of planning ahead to implement an inclusive, participatory program. *Note: the questions are written from the perspective of the participant being a child but the process can be used for a participant of any age.*

STEP 1: Ask about the child and their disability

Questions program staff should ask themselves:

- Have you received a class list?
- Has there been a disclosure of a participant with a disability?
- Do you know how to search Class Lists with Prompts to generate a report that will only show clients who've registered and answered yes to “Does the client have a disability?”
- If there was a disclosure, do you need more information about the person and their disability? If yes:
 - Have you read the Inclusion Ideas/Program Implications for working with people with specific disabilities?
 - Have you had a conversation with the family?
 - Did you phone the participant to ask any questions before the program began?

Questions to ask a parent/guardian:

- What are some of your child's interests?
- What does your child like? Dislike?
- What are your child's strengths?
- What is your child's skill level?
- Does your child respond better to verbal, visual or tactile prompts and reminders?
- What is the nature of your child's disability?
- Do you have some ideas/strategies of how your child can participate in the activities?
- Is there any additional information we need to know about the disability or related condition?

In order to provide an inclusive recreation program, staff should obtain information from parents/guardians about the child. Families are your best resource as they know their child best. Background information will help staff get to know the child with a disability and facilitate planning for the child to be meaningfully included — just like any other child. When speaking with a parent/guardian, always ask strength-based questions about their child and any disability needs that might affect their child's participation. Reassure them that all information will be used for planning purposes and will only be shared with the staff of their child's program.

Emphasize to parents that the intent of asking these questions is so you can collaborate to best prepare a plan for their child to have a fun experience.

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Onward/ By 2036, 90 per cent of Calgarians will participate in recreational opportunities.

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STEP 2: Ask about support

Questions to ask a parent/guardian:

- How has your son/daughter been supported before?
- What was it that made your child successful?
- How does your child communicate their needs/wants?
- Is assistance needed with personal care?
- Does your child have any aggressive or inappropriate behaviour?
- What are possible triggers for behaviours?
- What strategies help your child calm down?



STEP 3: Define or identify safety concerns

Questions to ask a parent/guardian:

- Does your child willingly stay with the group? Do they wander or run away?
- Does your child have difficulty with transitions?
- Is there any medical information related to the disability that staff need to be aware of?
- Does any medication need to be taken during program hours? If so, has a medication permission form been completed?
- Does your child understand the concept of danger?
- What ratio is the child used to working with?
- How does your child communicate if they are upset? What will we see and/or hear?
- Are there any circumstances in which your child may react or behave physically?



STEP 4: Inclusion in activities

Questions program staff should ask themselves:

- Are all of the children playing and having fun?
- Is the child actively participating?
- Has the child made friends?
- Is anyone left out?
- Have you adapted your lesson plans for disability specific modifications?
- Have you made the instructions clear so all children understood?
- Have you done everything within your resources to have the child included?
- Can you partner one child with another?
- Do you have access to volunteers to help within the program?



STEP 5: Evaluate and keep lines of communication open

Questions program staff should ask themselves:

- Have you achieved the goals hoped to be achieved through this recreation experience?
- Have you maintained communication with parent/guardian throughout the program?
- Have you shared positive stories with parents/guardians?
- Have you informed your supervisor (or if summer day camp, an inclusion facilitator) about a challenging participant?
- Have you contacted the parent/guardian to gain helpful information /strategies regarding challenges?
- Have you consistently implemented the ideas, tips and strategies?

Inclusion will differ for every person with a disability and success depends on trying first and then problem solving with all stakeholders including leaders, programmers, specialists, senior attendants, supervisors and parents. This process will also help staff assess how to respond to issues and provide programming practices to follow before requesting a support worker/aide from families.

Thanks to all Recreation staff and community partners who provided input during the development of this resource.

Acknowledgements

Lead Writer: Darlene Boyes, Community Resource Coordinator – Disability Outreach, City of Calgary, Recreation

The development of this resource was supported by:
The Alberta Association for Community Living (AACL)

References

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