

Improving Employment Readiness Through Recreation



Youth with physical disabilities develop valuable life skills from participation in recreation that can improve employment readiness

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

WHY THIS MATTERS

Youth with disabilities face **higher risk for unemployment** when compared to their typically developing peers. Participation in **recreation can assist in improving employment readiness** and contribute to decreasing this discrepancy.

KEY FACTS

- ❑ There are approximately **43 000 working age youth with physical disabilities** in Canada. The employment rate for youth with a disability is 14.4% while for typically developing youth it is 31.2%.
- ❑ Lack of engagement in recreation can lead to an increase in days of pain, depression, and anxiety. If established in adolescence, these **patterns typically extend into adulthood**.
- ❑ Employment in youth with disabilities is a **strong predictor of employment in adulthood**.
- ❑ Youth with disabilities do not receive adequate employment readiness training in high school, despite reports that **this group of individuals would welcome support**.

- ❑ Participation in recreation promotes the development of **communication and interpersonal skills** by enhancing social self perceptions.
- ❑ When sports skills and social relationships are promoted during recreation, youth with physical disabilities report the **formation of meaningful relationships**. These strengthen communication skills.
- ❑ Recreation fosters enhancement of self esteem and self awareness. This increases confidence to try **new activities** and redefines **physical capabilities**.
- ❑ Community based programs aid in **generalizing life skills** from specific recreational activities to a variety of contexts.
- ❑ Community recreation that involves youth and their family strengthens their relationship. Strong family bonds increase the ability of youth to **navigate barriers during transition to adulthood**.

“Employers often emphasize soft skills (e.g. social or people skills), problem-solving skills and teamwork”.

- Lindsay et al. (2014) pg 1652

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

- ❑ Youth face complex decisions regarding disclosure about their disability. This disclosure can lead to **important sharing about capabilities** and possible accommodations, but also potential discrimination.
- ❑ Participation in recreation is known to **improve personal well-being** in ways that allow individuals to navigate barriers in the community more effectively.
- ❑ Achievements in sports may help youth with disabilities recognize their capabilities, leading them to **effectively challenge inaccurate stereotypes**.
- ❑ Participation in recreation can provide experiences for youth with physical disabilities that can later be called upon to **demonstrate life skills** in job interviews.

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- ❑ Employment readiness improves when youth with physical disabilities have opportunities to **develop interaction and communication skills, enhance self-efficacy and share experiences**.
- ❑ Generalization of life skills can be promoted by presenting opportunities for **real world applications** and by using **experiential learning**. Both of these are found in community based recreation.
- ❑ Having an awareness of personal **strengths and limitations** is a crucial component of the job interview process. For youth with a disability deciding to disclose information about their disability should **focus on capabilities** and potential accommodations.
- ❑ Youth with disabilities can improve their presentation in interviews by **drawing on past experiences in extra-curricular sports activities**. Emphasis should be placed on their use of communication and interpersonal skills.

“Community-based therapeutic recreation programs [...] enhance overall health, quality of life, social skills, independence, and self determinetaion”

- King et al., 2012 Pg 328