



NATIONAL CENTER ON HEALTH, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND DISABILITY

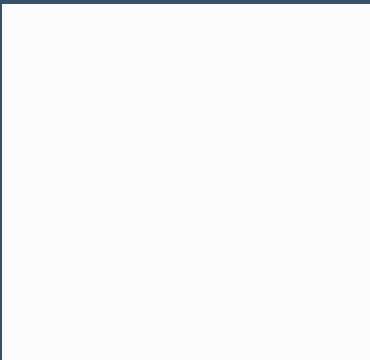


Physical Activity  
and Sport in

# Youth with a Disability

NCHPAD  
[www.nchpad.org](http://www.nchpad.org)

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Physical activity and sport benefit the body, mind, and spirit of all youth including youth with a disability. Across all sectors, the nation is currently lacking in education and opportunities for all youth including youth with a disability to participate. The narrative doesn't have to end there - we can change the story.



## Statistics

**38%**

Obesity rates for youth with a disability are 38% higher than youth without a disability.

**4.5**

Physical activity levels are 4.5 times lower for youth with a disability.

**1.5 million**

Students in public primary and secondary schools with a physical impairment are excluded from having access to participate in athletic competitions.

**24 States  
16 Colleges**

Offer adapted interscholastic or intercollegiate sports programs for students with a disability.

# BENEFITS

"Individuals with disabilities who participate in sports have higher self-esteem, better body images and higher rates of academic success; are more confident and more likely to graduate from high school and matriculate in college. Furthermore, sport is where skills like teamwork, goal setting, the pursuit of excellence in performance and other achievement- oriented behaviors necessary for success in the workplace are developed." -Lakowski, T. and Long, T.(2011)

## Benefits to Physical Activity and Sport



### 1 Enhanced Overall Well-Being

Reverse de-conditioning, optimize physical function, decrease risk of secondary health conditions. Maintain or increase muscle strength, flexibility and joint structure and function.



### 2 Reduce Obesity

Increase cardiovascular fitness, decrease risk of osteoporosis and impaired circulation. Decrease risk of increased blood pressure and cholesterol levels.



### 3 Psychological and Psychosocial Benefits

Form friendships, develop self-identity, increase self-esteem and community involvement. Foster independence, coping abilities and teamwork.



# Barriers to Physical Activity and Sport



1

## Lack of Policies

Federal Law protecting the rights of children with a disability to participate in sport and physical activity exists, but more needs to be done in the policy sector to ensure youth with disability are being provided equal access in a safe and effective environment.

2

## Lack of Resources and Training

Youth coaches and recreation facilitators are not adequately trained to provide effective and safe coaching techniques to include youth with a disability in their programs.

3

## Lack of Opportunities

Inclusive sport opportunities are few and far between. If a program is offered often youth don't have access to the adaptive equipment or accessible transportation to participate.

4

## Physical and Attitudinal Barriers

Attitudinal barriers in communities leads to a lack of awareness of local opportunities. Specialized programs can be beneficial but the inclusion of youth in mainstream sports further helps to tear down barriers and social stigmas.

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*Adolescents with disability cited the cost of specialized equipment as the most frequent reason for not participating.*

*King et.al. (2003)*

”



*Inclusion in athletics is how children learn from each other, build social skills and optimize their growth and development. - Dr. Jim Rimmer*

## Solutions

### 1 Built Environment Change

Organizations should ask themselves what structural features need to change in order to provide equal access.

Examples Include: ramps, signage, park play equipment, curb cuts, and surfaces.

### 2 Services Change

Organizations should ask themselves what services could we provide that would increase participation such as a peer assistant, interpreters, accessible transportation.

### 3 Instruction Change

Organizations should provide training and education around disability awareness to all of their coaches and employees.

### 4 Equipment and Technology

Organizations should look at what products or tools they can provide to promote participation.

Examples include: adaptive sports equipment to communication devices.

### 5 Policy Change

Organizations should create policies that provide for inclusion at all levels.



## TESTIMONIALS

# Girls on the Run<sup>®</sup>



### Girls on The Run International



*Girls on the Run has implemented inclusion strategies at every level. Including their policies, trainings, and marketing materials.*



*They piloted their new inclusive curriculum and coaches trainings in 16 different councils.*



*"My child came home from every practice excited to build relationships outside of school with her peers. It was the highlight of her spring."*





## Resources

Lakowski, T. & Long, T.

(2011). Proceedings: Physical Activity and Sport for People with Disabilities. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development

Murphy and Carbone (2008) Promoting the participation of Children With Disabilities in Sports, Recreation, and Physical Activities.

King G, Law M, King S, Rosenbaum P, Kertoy MK, Young NL,. A conceptual model of the factors affecting the recreation and leisure participation of children with disabilities. Phys Occup Ther Pediatr. 2003; 23 (1): 63-90

Girls on the Run International [www.girlsontherun.org](http://www.girlsontherun.org)

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*Creating a culture of health also means creating a culture of Inclusion*

-Shellie Pfohl

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**CELEBRATING 20 YEARS  
OF INCLUSIVE HEALTHY COMMUNITIES**





## CONTACT

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