

# Recreation and Inclusion: Are Children with Disabilities Having Fun Yet?

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# Overview

- Review definitions
- Discuss benefits of recreation
- Describe Contextual and Environmental issues related to inclusive recreation
- Use Human Rights of Children with Disabilities as a framework for further discussion of increasing recreation opportunities for children with disabilities

# Definitions

# Inclusion

- Children are placed in general educational or program settings with same-age peers and received services congruent with their short- and long-term goals
  - Blackman, 1992

# Participation

- Involvement in a life-situation— includes personal and environmental factors
- Essential aspect of child health and well-being
  - International Classification of Functioning, Health and Disability, WHO, 2001

# More definitions

- Participation: feeling of belonging and engagement
  - Eriksson & Grandlund, 2004
- Self-determination: Acting as the primary causal agent in one's life and making choices and decisions regarding one's quality of life free from undue external influence or interference
  - Wehmeyer & Kelchner, 1995

# Goals for Our Children

- Inclusion
- Participation
- Self-determination

# **Benefits of Recreation**

# Physical and Psychological Health

- Physical Conditioning
- Motor Coordination
- Endurance
- Self-esteem
- Social skills
  - Veatch, 1993

# Quality of Life

- Personally meaningful recreation is recognized as an important element of life quality for people of all ages and abilities
  - Mactavish & Schleien, 2004

# Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory of Human Development

<b>Level</b>	<b>Area of Focus</b>	<b>Variables</b>
Macrosystem	Community	Values, Beliefs, Culture
Exosystem	Organization	Meetings, legislative settings, policy boards
Mesosystem	Relationships	Parent/teacher, among families, among children
Microsystem	Child	Classroom, child with disabilities

# **Contextual/ Environmental Issues**

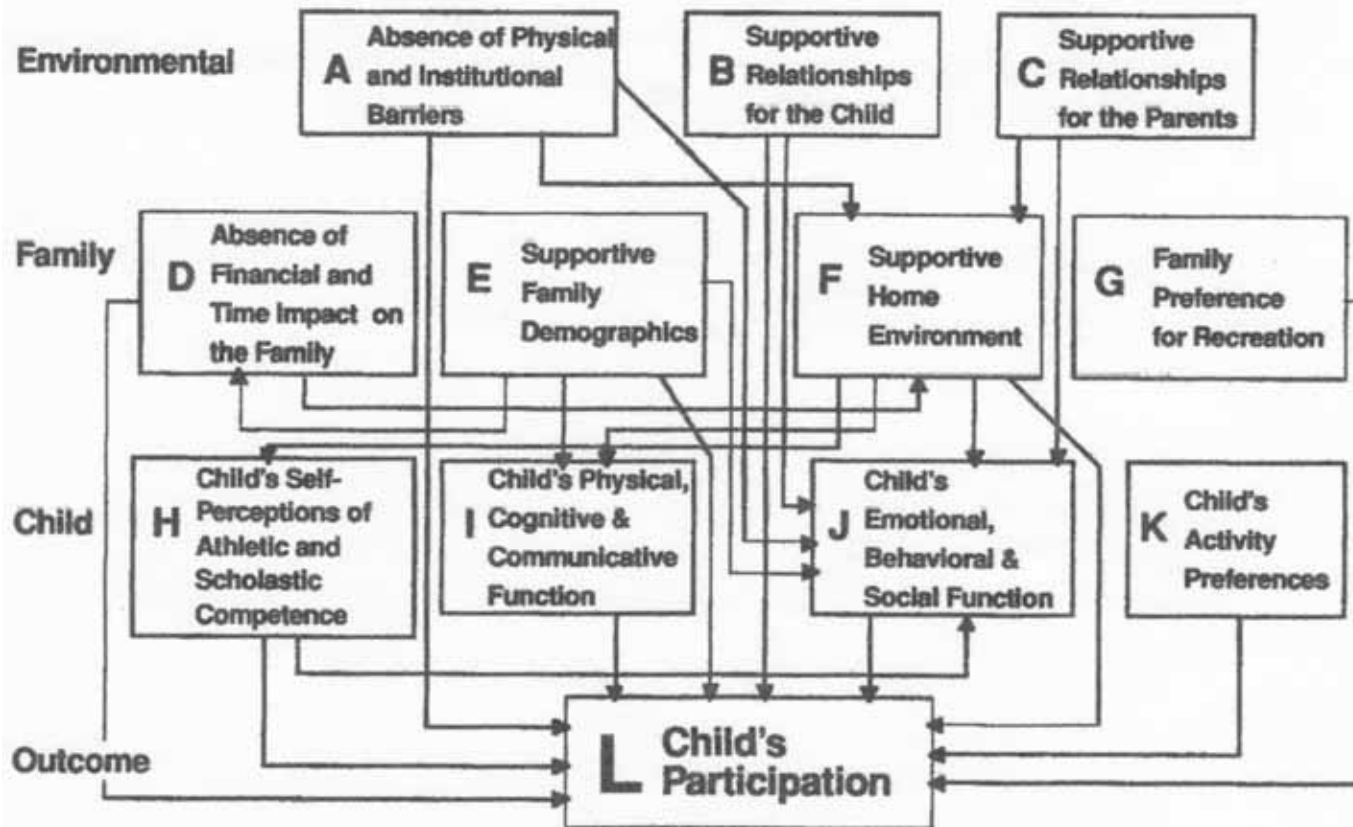
# Formal versus Informal Activities

- Community survey reported low participation rates of children with physical disabilities
- Inclusion of children with disabilities in informal community-based activities, such as scouts, martial arts, or ballet, with their peers requires educating and increasing the awareness of the larger community
  - Rosenberg, 2000
- Participation of children with disabilities is especially restricted in 'free activities", i.e., activities not structured by adults
  - Eriksson, 2005

# Model of Factors Affecting Recreation Participation of Children with Disabilities

(King et al., 2003)

FIGURE 1. A Model of Factors Affecting the Participation of Children with Disabilities



# Federal Policy Related to Recreation for People with Disabilities

Year	Legislation	Influence
1990	Americans with Disabilities Act	Expands civil rights
1990	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act	Identifies therapeutic recreation as part of transition plans
1986	Education for All Handicapped Children Act Amendments	Mandates early intervention programs
1975	Education for All Handicapped Children Act	Identifies recreation, PT and OT as related services
1973	Rehabilitation Act	Prohibits discrimination in rec programs on the basis of disability
1968	Architectural Barriers Act	Requires accessible recreation facilities

# Economic Issues

- U.S. families raising children with disabilities are reporting
  - Higher income families affected by financial hardship
  - Challenged by food, housing and health expenses
  - Many struggle to pay phone bills
  - Forty percent experience food hardship
  - Sometimes results in postponing medical, dental care
    - University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2008

# Economic Issues

- Report on children with disabilities and their families receiving SSI:
  - SSI was the most important source of family income, with earnings a close second
  - Less than 4% of children lived with adults who owned stocks, mutual funds, notes, CDs, or savings bonds
  - SSI payments are used to cover expenses other than medical bills for the majority of children
  - Most children lived in a household headed by a single mother
    - Rupp et al., 2005-2006

# Health Issues

- Obesity rate of adolescents with mobility limitations (29%) almost double that of those without mobility limitations
- Related health issues:
  - ⌋ Lower levels of physical activity
  - ⌋ Higher levels of secondary health conditions
  - ⌋ Barriers to consuming nutritious diets
  - ⌋ Lack of knowledge of healthy lifestyle behaviors
  - ⌋ Limited opportunity for social engagement
    - Rimmer, Rowland, & Yamaki, 2007

# Quality of Life

- Youth Quality of Life Disability Screener used with 2801 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> graders with and without disabilities in rural community
- Those with disabilities reported lower QOL
- Forty-six percent of adolescents with disabilities reported missing out on desired activities often or fairly often versus 16% of non-disabled
- Nineteen percent of adolescents with disabilities reported being made to feel unwelcome by others their age fairly often or very often
- Reduction of social and environmental barriers to promote inclusion in school, family and community activities recommended
  - Edwards, Patrick, & Topolski, 2003

# Federal Initiatives Regarding Disability and Health

- Surgeon General's Call to Action to Improve the Health and Wellness of Persons with Disabilities, 2005
- Healthy People 2010, 2000
- Report of the Surgeon General on Physical Activity and Health, 1996

# Barriers to Inclusive Recreation

- Common barriers include
  - Child's functional limitations (18%)
  - High costs (15%)
  - Lack of nearby facilities or programs (10%)
- Other factors:
  - Inactive role models
  - Competing demands and time pressures
  - Unsafe environments
  - Lack of adequate facilities
  - Insufficient funds
  - Inadequate access to quality daily physical education

Murphy, Carbone, & Council on Children with Disabilities, 2008

# Family Life and Recreation

- Study using both a survey and interviews of parents of children with developmental disabilities revealed:
  - Recreation typically involved small combinations of family members in physical recreation (swimming, walking, bike-riding)
  - Parents view these interactions as beneficial in many ways
  - Planning and finding activities to accommodate wide ages and skill ranges can be stressful
    - **MacTavish & Schlein, 2004**

# Human Rights of Children with Disabilities

- To downplay the disability as just another human difference or deny it altogether...fails to help the child learn to live with a stigmatized condition, cope with discrimination, and become inoculated against oppression, all tasks that are fundamental to successful living with a disability.
  - Olkin, 1999

# Right # 4

- To see positive role models of adults and children with disabilities

# Right # 5

- To have a positive identity that includes and incorporates the disability

# Right # 8

- To be allowed to experience a full range of emotions

# Right # 10

- To affiliate with peers both with and without disabilities

# Right #12

- To live in a barrier-free, accommodating, and tolerant physical and social environment

# Right # 13

- To be a child

# Summary

- Inclusion, participation and self-determination are important for the healthy development of children with disabilities
- Recreation is key to physical and psychological health, as well as quality of life
- Numerous contextual issues impact opportunities for recreation
- Children with disabilities are more alike than different from children who are not disabled, but their disability-related needs including those related to recreation, must be considered for healthy development

- **“The challenge...is to continue the revolution so that it truly meets the needs of those at the bottom of the disability ladder, not just the “talented 10%.”**
- **Litvak & Martin, 2000**

- **Are children with disabilities having fun yet?**

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