



Utah Parent Center
Special needs, extraordinary potential

Recreation Opportunities

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The transition your son or daughter will make from being a child to being an adult member of the community is a long journey. This journey can be difficult for anyone, but for your child with disabilities, determining where to go, the best way to arrive there, and then completing the journey can be especially challenging. This is why it is so important for you to think about, as early as possible, the important transitions your child will need to make and to develop a plan. Take the ideas in this handout to your Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting when you start talking about transition. This handout may help your IEP team generate other ideas about the transition to adulthood that apply specifically to your child.

With your encouragement and careful planning, you can help pave the way for your child to go where he or she wants to go!

The Transition to Recreation and Leisure Activities

When parents think about their son or daughter making the transition to adulthood and living independently, they often first think about what kind of job he or she will have. But it is just as important to give careful consideration to what your child experiences after the work day.

Leisure activities for your child with disabilities do not need to be specialized services or programs. Almost any community program can accommodate a person with a disability, as long as the program's leaders are aware of the disability. When trying out new programs, call a supervisor, coach, or manager and discuss your child's disability and possible accommodations.

Recreational activities can be a source of fulfillment, a way to meet others and make friends, and a way to become a part of a community. They are also a great way to stay healthy and have fun!

Explore Your Options

You can start helping your child prepare for this important transition by encouraging him or her to explore a variety of recreation and leisure activities that are available during school, after school, and in the summer.

There are all kinds of different activities at school that you can encourage your child to try. Maybe your child would love to be involved in sports or to play chess with a chess club. Talk to your son or daughter about what kinds of things he or she would like to do, and then talk to a counselor at school to find out what is available. Some school activities are:

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- Yearbook, school newspaper, or newsletters
- Clubs (focused on academic subjects, games, sports, hobbies)
- Student government
- Choir or band
- Sports

It is easy to find activities around the house that you and your child can work on together: You might try cooking or gardening, for example. Developing skills like this can be a way of spending time with your child, helping him or her to build confidence, and helping to prepare him or her for the transition to independent living. Here are some home activities:

- Gardening
- Home repair or building projects
- Playing a musical instrument
- Computer activities
- Writing poems or stories
- Hobbies such as model building, arts and crafts, or photography
- Reading
- Running, biking, or other fitness related activities

There are also many recreational activities that are offered through the local community. Some are organized as classes, clubs or community events, and others are less formal. Some recreational programs are for everyone; others are especially designed for people with disabilities. Examples of places in your community where your son or daughter can become involved in recreational activities include:

- Summer camps
- Community recreation programs
- YMCA/YWCA or other fitness centers
- Religious groups
- Community education
- Horseback riding lessons, offered at area farms or through the We Can Ride program
- Special Olympics
- Centers for Independent Living often have wheelchair leagues or other specialized programs

Set Your Destination and Map a Course

Remember, involving your child in recreational and leisure activities is more than just providing a fun way to spend time after school. You are also helping in his or her journey to becoming an adult.

Recreation and leisure activities are abundant for school-age children and easy for them to be involved in. Once your son or daughter has grown up, though, staying involved in recreational activities may require a little more initiative. That is one of the reasons it is important for you to help pave the way-by helping your child to develop a strong interest in different recreational activities. Your son's or daughter's interest will help him or her to stay involved as an adult. As your child develops a set of recreational activities, start to consider how they might be able to pursue these as an adult.

You may want to start by simply developing a set of recreation and leisure activities that are all sources of joy and fulfillment. You can help your child reach this goal by:

- Making contact with different recreational organizations
- Helping your child explore different options that are available
- Encouraging your child to participate
- Supporting your child as he or she pursues different activities
- Pursuing an activity together with your child

Your child may be eager to pursue a particular interest, or he or she may try many different kinds of activities. The important thing is that, along the way, your child is building confidence and having fun.

Jeb's Story

Jeb bags groceries in a local grocery store. He has been doing this same job since graduating from high school. He reports to work at 7 a.m. and returns home at 3 p.m. He knows many of the shoppers by name. Jeb rents a room with his beagle Sophie in a retired couples' home within walking distance of the store.

For many years, Jeb has been a member of a dog training club, and one of his favorite activities is "tracking" with Sophie. He helps lay out practice scent tracks for the group's weekly training sessions. These sessions take place all over the community: farm fields, fair grounds, parks, and baseball fields. Fellow members pick Jeb and Sophie up and take them home.

Twice a year the club puts on a national titling event. Individuals and their dogs come from neighboring states to attend. Jeb always attends the meets, where he volunteers by carrying the marking flags for the track layers. After four years, Sophie and Jeb passed the basic tracking test and earned a title!

Resources That Will Help You Reach Your Goals

There are many different resources out there to help you help your child connect with activities that he or she will love. Contact these groups or individuals to talk about what programs are available.

- School guidance counselors, coaches, and teachers
- Religious youth group leaders
- YMCA/YWCA
- Summer camps
- Community parks and recreation
- Community education programs
- Fitness centers
- Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts

Community Education Programs Serving Adults with Disabilities

Community education in Utah is working to ensure citizen involvement and lifelong learning for all. Including people with disabilities in community education is legally mandated.

These programs can provide classes on areas of interest such as cooking, sports, money management, art, drama, music, computers, and a variety of other topics. When registering for the class, be sure to share what accommodations are needed to be successful in the class.

Contact your local school district and ask for the community education coordinator.

Other resources

Utah Parent Center

801-272-1051 or 800-468-1160

www.utahparentcenter.org

Contact for a list of disability-specific organizations.

Disability Law Center

801-363-1347 or 800-662-9080

www.disabilitylawcenter.org

Utah State Office of Education

801-538-7500

www.schools.utah.gov

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