

THE EXTENT & TYPES OF RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE STATE OF MAINE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

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The purpose of this study was to determine the extent and types of recreational opportunities within the state of Maine that were available to people with disabilities. The major findings were that people with disabilities participated in recreational opportunities on a limited basis, that the majority of activities offered were stereotypical of people with disabilities and that the majority of activities were integrated into regular recreation programs.

Recreation is a basic right which should be afforded to all people (Austin, 1987), yet various groups in society including people with disabilities often are excluded because of environmental barriers such as architecture, transportation, economics, and public attitudes. In the past, recreation opportunities have consisted of segregated programs sponsored through advocate associations such as the National Association for Retarded Citizens or the National Wheelchair Association. Through litigation such as the Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens (PARC) vs. Pennsylvania court case and legislation such as Section 504 of PL 93-112 (The Rehabilitation Act) and PL 94-142 (The Education for All Handicapped Children Act) individuals have gained the right to live and be educated in the least restrictive environment. This has facilitated the movement of large numbers of people into community living situations and has shifted the responsibility for recreation from advocate associations to community agencies and to the private sector.

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent and types of recreation programs available to adults and children with disabilities within the state of Maine. The study was designed to compile data from federal, state, municipal, private non-profit and camp sources and to compare information concerning the following:

1. The availability of recreational opportunities for people with disabilities.
2. The types of recreational opportunities available.
3. The types of disabilities of people who participated.
4. The numbers of people with disabilities that were being served.
5. The administrative aspects of recreational programs for people with disabilities such as funding, staffing and timing of programs.
6. The current level of integration within recreation programs.
7. The reasons for the lack of opportunities within recreational programs.
8. The assistance needed by programs to provide recreational opportunities for people with disabilities.

Procedures

Because the study looked at programs on the federal, state, municipal, private non-profit and organized camp levels, the

population was compiled from many sources. Information concerning federal organizations was obtained from the National Park Service, the National Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and military installations within the state. The Bureau of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and the Maine Bureau of Parks and Recreation provided information concerning state programs. Information on local government sponsored programs was obtained from municipal park and recreation departments. Organizations including Boys Clubs, YMCAs, YWCAs, Boy and Girl Scouts, Special Olympics, Hurricane Island Outward Bound School, the Recreation Center for the Handicapped, Inc., Maine Special Olympics, Freedom Riders, and Maine Handicapped Skiing provided information on programming in the non-profit area. Information on organized camps was obtained from the 1989 Maine Directory of Children's Camps published by the Maine Youth Camping Association.

A survey was designed and tested specifically for this study and contained structured questions of the multiple choice type with the respondent choosing one or more fixed alternatives. Several researchers (Crocker, 1989; Schleien & Werder, 1985) have developed survey instruments to compile data concerning community recreation for people with disabilities and copies of these surveys were obtained for examination.

An introductory letter was sent to 230 participants which introduced the researcher and explained the purpose and the procedures of the research. The instrument was pilot tested, revised, and then sent to 202 participants along with a letter and a postage-paid return envelope. The number of surveys sent out was reduced from the original number of 230 because of duplication of names, incorrect addresses, and the desire not to participate by several people. As a result of the initial mailing and follow-up procedures, 122 of the 202 surveys (60.4%) were returned. Table 1 represents the return rates for the five groupings of programs surveyed.

Table 1. Survey Return Rates (N=122)

Grouping	Sent	Received	Percentage
Federal	7	7	100.0
State	7	3	42.8
Municipal	70	45	64.2
Private Non-Profit	38	24	63.1
Camps	80	43	53.8

Findings

1. The following percentages of agencies or businesses reported having people with disabilities participate in recreational opportunities: federal grouping = 71.4%; state grouping = 100%; municipal grouping = 77.7%; private non-profit grouping = 95.8%; camps grouping = 44.2%.
2. The program areas offered most frequently on an integrated basis by agencies and businesses were arts and crafts (68.2%), swimming (65.8%), team sports (60.9%), camping (68.1%) and special events (54.9%).

3. The program areas that were offered most frequently on a segregated basis by agencies and businesses were arts and crafts (6.5%), dance (6.5%), swimming (15.6%), team sports (9.1%), camping (5.2%), horseback riding (5.2%) and special events (7.8%).
4. The following groups of people with physical disabilities participated most frequently in recreational opportunities in 1989: federal grouping - no data available; state grouping - no data available; municipal grouping - health impairments (median = 5.0), speech and language impairments (median = 3.5) and hearing impairments (median = 3.0); private non-profit grouping - health impairments (median = 25.0), orthopedic impairments (median = 18.0) and speech and language impairments (median = 12.0); camp grouping - speech and language impairments (median = 30.0), health impairments (median = 3.0) and hearing impairments (median = 6.0).
5. The following groups of people with cognitive disabilities participated most frequently in recreational opportunities in 1989: federal grouping - no data available; state grouping - no data available; municipal grouping - learning disability (median = 5.5), mental retardation (median = 5.0), private non-profit grouping - learning disabilities (median = 16.5), mental retardation (median = 16.0); camp grouping - learning disabilities (median = 4.5), mental retardation (median = 40.0).
6. People with psychological disabilities participated in recreational opportunities in the following frequencies in 1989: federal grouping - no data; state grouping - no data; municipal grouping - median = 2.0; private non-profit grouping - median = 2.5; camp grouping - median = 30.0.
7. The following percentages of people with physical disabilities participated in recreational opportunities: federal grouping - no data; state grouping - no data; municipal grouping - median = .46; private non-profit grouping - median = 1.74; camp grouping - median = 1.49.
8. The following percentages of people with cognitive disabilities participated in recreational opportunities: federal grouping - no data; state grouping - no data; municipal grouping - median = .32; private non-profit grouping - median = .74; camp grouping - median = 2.13.
9. The following percentages of people with psychological disabilities participated in recreational opportunities: federal grouping - no data; state grouping - no data; municipal grouping - median = .11; private non-profit grouping - median = .34; camp grouping - median = .43.
10. The sources of funding for recreational programming varied widely depending on the nature of the agency or business (public or private), yet a certain percentage of the total funding within each grouping came from fees.
11. Programming was provided on a year round basis by 60% of the federal grouping, 66.6% of the state grouping, 71.4% of the municipal grouping and 43.4% of the private non-profit grouping. The majority of the programming in the camp grouping (89.4%) was done during the summer.
12. The largest percentage (57.6%) of respondents indicated that general staff were responsible for providing direct service to people with disabilities.
13. The percentage of segregated activities (12.5%) was considerably less than the percentage of integrated activities (87.5%).
14. Of the agencies and businesses (18.3%) that did not offer recreational opportunities to people with disabilities, 51.4% indicated that one reason for not providing programs was lack of funds and 48.6% indicated inaccessible facilities and leaders who were not trained to work with people with disabilities.
15. Within the group of agencies and businesses that did not provide programs, 81.1% indicated that technical assistance was needed and 78.4% indicated that staff training and professional programming consultation was necessary for them to be able to provide programming.
16. Within the group of agencies and businesses (81.7%) that did provide programs, 63.5% indicated that staff training was needed and 56.5% indicated that financial assistance was necessary for them to be able to expand their offerings.

Discussion

Availability of Recreational Opportunities

The first intent of this study was to determine the availability of recreational opportunities for people with disabilities. Respondents were asked to indicate whether or not people with disabilities participated in their recreation programs. The high percentage of response from the federal (71.4%), state (100%) and municipal (77.7%) groupings indicates that people with disabilities participated in these programs. As a result of federal legislation such as the Rehabilitation Act (PL 93-112), organizations that receive money from the federal government may not discriminate against an individual with disabilities solely on the basis of that disability. It appears from the data that the federal, state and local groupings are cognizant of PL 93-112 and their responsibility to provide recreation programs for all people in the community.

The private non-profit grouping also had a large response to the question (95.8%). This grouping included organizations such as the Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, YMCAs, YWCAs, and Boys and Girls Clubs whose programs are aimed at the development of the "whole child," and are open to all members of the community (Erickson, 1983). The data suggest that this grouping as a whole provided recreation programs that are open to the community and that include people with disabilities. The low response from the camp grouping (44.2%) indicates that not many people with disabilities participated in summer camp experiences in Maine. Since there are several summer camps which offer programs specifically to people with disabilities, it appears that these camps were not members of the Maine Youth Camping Association and were not included in the directory of summer camps published by the Association which was used for this study. Consequently these camps were not surveyed. Based on the data from this study, the camp grouping as a whole has a low participation rate from people with disabilities.

Activities Offered

The second intent of this study was to identify what types of recreational opportunities were available to people with disabilities. Results of the survey indicate that the activities offered most frequently to people with disabilities in Maine included arts and crafts, dance, team sports, swimming, physical fitness activities, horseback riding, camping and special events. The majority of these activities are stereotypical of

people with disabilities. Activities such as arts and crafts, swimming, sports and games and special events have historically been offered to people with disabilities because of their therapeutic value (Kraus, 1983).

Within this study it was found that most of the activities offered were similar to the ones historically offered, yet there were some differences. For example, camping was offered as an activity for both people without disabilities and people with disabilities in every grouping except for the municipal grouping. Dance and horseback riding were offered as segregated programs (available only to people with disabilities) in both the municipal and private non-profit groupings. The variety of activities that many agencies or businesses offered broke away from the stereotypical activities for people with disabilities with examples such as auto mechanics, puppeteering, photography, gymnastics, judo, tennis, downhill and cross country skiing, canoeing, and wilderness adventure activities. Although the majority of activities offered by agencies and businesses were stereotypical, there was evidence of a trend towards a wider spectrum of activities being offered to people with disabilities.

People Who Took Part in Programming

The third intent of this study was to determine the types of disabilities of people who took part in recreation programming. The data from this study seem to indicate that within the state of Maine, people with a wide variety of disabilities were served. People with physical disabilities who participated most frequently were those people with speech and language impairments, health impairments, orthopedic impairments and hearing impairments. People with cognitive disabilities who participated most frequently were those people with mental retardation. People with psychological disabilities participated in recreation programs, but it was difficult to obtain an accurate picture because of the hidden nature of the disability.

Numbers of People Who Participated in Programming

The fourth intent of this study was to determine how many people took part in recreational opportunities. The incidence of people with physical disabilities in the general population is as follows: hearing impairments - 1%; visual impairments - .04%; speech and language impairments - 3%; and cerebral palsy - .15% (Batshaw & Perret, 1986). Due to the lack of uniformity in defining orthopedic impairments and health impairments, statistics of incidence are neither meaningful nor accurate (Dunn & Fait, 1989). The percentage of people with physical disabilities participating in programs on the municipal (.46), private non-profit (1.74) and camp (1.49) levels was below the majority of the national incidence rates. These data suggest that people with physical disabilities are being underserved in all three groupings. Specific numbers of people participating in programs was not kept by any of the respondents in the federal and state groupings.

The incidence of people in the general population with mental retardation is 3%, people with learning disabilities is 4-5% (Dunn & Fait, 1989) and people with autism is .04% (Batshaw & Perret, 1986). The percentage of people with cognitive disabilities participating in both the municipal (.32) and private non-profit (.74) groupings in Maine was well below the national incidence rate. The percentage of people with cognitive disabilities in the camps grouping (2.13) was above the incidence rate, however, the majority of the people with cognitive disabilities within the camps grouping had learning disabilities. These findings indicate that people with cognitive

disabilities were underserved in terms of recreational opportunities.

The incidence of psychological disabilities is difficult to pinpoint because a growing tolerance for greater variations in acceptable behavior makes it more difficult to label certain patterns of behavior as being unacceptable or abnormal (Carter, Van Andel & Robb, 1985). In the early 1970's psychological disabilities were said to affect one out of every ten persons in the United States (Kraus, 1983). The percentage of people with psychological disabilities participating in each of the municipal (.11), private non-profit (.34) and camp (.43) groupings was below 1% which is well below the general national incidence rate of 10%. One respondent noted that the numbers of people with psychological disabilities was unknown because unless a problem was specifically addressed to administrators or to leaders, the disability would not be recognized. The hidden nature of psychological disabilities make them more difficult to recognize. It is not possible to conclude based on data from this study whether or not the population of people with psychological disabilities is being served adequately.

Extent of Integration

The fifth intent of this study was to determine the extent of integration. The data indicate that the majority of recreation programs in Maine that served people with disabilities were integrated. The percentage of segregated activities (12.5%) was considerably less than the percentage of integrated activities (87.5%). The private non-profit grouping was the largest area in which segregated programs existed, yet within these programs there was evidence that the philosophies of integration and normalization are changing recreation programming. There are also several camps within the state which offer segregated programs. Since the majority of camps within the state offer limited access to people with disabilities other than learning disabilities, these segregated camps remain a viable option for people with disabilities. Summer camps offer opportunities for personal growth and human interaction and when these experiences take place in an integrated setting both people with and without disabilities benefit from the experience.

Administrative Aspects of Programs

Funding. The sixth intent of this study was to determine administrative aspects of recreation programs for people with disabilities such as funding sources, timing of programs and leadership of programs. Respondents were asked to indicate the percentage of funding for their organization which came from public tax funds, fees, grants, voluntary contributions, United Way or other sources. The results indicated that funding sources varied depending on the private or public nature of the agency or business, but that within every grouping fees constituted a certain part of the funding.

The implication of this finding is that for people with disabilities to be able to participate in recreational opportunities, they need to contribute monetarily. A Harris Poll conducted in 1985 indicated that two thirds of the population of people with physical disabilities in the United States between the ages of 16-64 were unemployed (Harris, 1986). When people with disabilities are able to find employment, the positions are frequently low-paying with limited opportunity for advancement. Compounded with this are the higher than average expenses incurred by some people with disabilities to purchase specialized equipment such as vans with wheelchair lifts and/or custom-made clothing. The end

result is less discretionary money available to spend on leisure pursuits.

The principle of normalization promotes optimal independent functioning and encourages integration into the mainstream of society. Part of that responsibility is paying for the things for which other people in the community pay. Free or reduced prices for people with disabilities is discouraged by the principle of normalization. Since many people with disabilities lack the income to be able to participate in recreation opportunities that cost money, the result is less participation in leisure by people who have disabilities (Kennedy, Austin & Smith, 1987). The fact that a certain percentage of the funding in all five groupings from the state of Maine comes from fees could be an important factor as to why more people with disabilities do not participate in recreational opportunities. The economic barrier which is caused by the application of a fee schedule may be a hindrance for participation by people with disabilities.

Timing of Programs. Respondents were asked to indicate if programming took place year-round, during the summer, or at other specific times during the year. Results indicated that the majority of programming for people with disabilities occurred either on a year-round basis or on a summer only basis. In the federal, state, municipal and private non-profit groupings over 50% of the respondents indicated that all of their programs ran year round. In the camp grouping, the majority indicated that programming ran during the summer months only. Since most camps are for children and young adults, it would be expected for them to run during the summer months. The data suggest that programs occurred on a continual basis, not just at certain times during the year. People with disabilities, like the rest of the population, have leisure needs during the entire year. The data from this study indicate that recreational opportunities are available to them throughout the year.

Staffing. It was found that general staff were responsible for providing direct service to people with disabilities the majority of the time. A small percentage (8.2%) of agencies in the municipal and private non-profit groupings indicated that therapeutic recreation specialists were responsible for programming. In order to integrate people with disabilities into recreational programs in the community, general staff need to be responsible for programming and teaching activities. Most agencies or businesses cannot afford to hire a therapeutic recreation specialist to ensure that people with disabilities are being served, and research shows that most people with disabilities living in the community do not want to receive therapeutic recreation in community settings, but simply desire to have the opportunity to take part in recreation experiences (Kennedy, Austin & Smith, 1987). It is the general staff of recreation agencies and businesses who need to be trained in techniques concerning integrating people with disabilities into regular recreation programs in order for recreation integration to be successful. The therapeutic recreation specialists role needs to change from one of organizing and leading recreation activities for people with disabilities to one of consulting and working with recreation organizations on the techniques to integrate programs.

Reasons for Lack of Programming

The seventh intent of the study was to determine the reasons that agencies or businesses lacked programming for people with disabilities. Three major responses were evident: lack of funds, inaccessible facilities and leaders who were not trained to work with people with disabilities. The three major responses dealt with money, as funding is necessary for making facilities more

accessible and for training staff. The implication of lack of funds is that if agencies and businesses are committed to the philosophies of normalization and integration, they will need to find methods to overcome the financial problems in order to provide programs for people with disabilities.

Assistance Needed

The final purpose of this study was to determine the assistance needed by agencies or businesses in order for them to be able to provide quality programming for people with disabilities. The largest percentage of respondents who did not provide programming (81.1%) indicated that technical assistance which was defined as accessible facilities and adapted equipment was necessary in order for them to develop recreational opportunities. The next largest percentage of respondents (78.4%) indicated staff training and professional programming consultation as being necessary for them to be able to provide programming. The largest percentage (63.5%) of programs among those that currently offer activities responded that staff training was necessary for them to be able to expand programming. The implication of these data is that in order for more agencies and businesses to develop additional recreational opportunities, facilities must be equipped to handle people with disabilities and staff must be trained to lead programs.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to determine the types and extent of recreational opportunities available to people with disabilities in the state of Maine. Data from this study indicate that there is much that recreation organizations can and should be doing to promote integrated recreation opportunities for people with disabilities.

1. The directors of recreation agencies and businesses need to become educated in the concepts of normalization and the methods of integrating their recreation programs. This could be done through professional organizations with (1) workshops at state and national conferences, (2) specific training sessions given to groups of professionals working in similar settings and (3) articles in professional journals at the state and national level.
2. The concept of including people with disabilities in recreational programming needs to be part of all aspects of recreation agencies and businesses (e.g.) policies and procedures, marketing, staff hiring and training, and program evaluation. Policy manuals should reflect the commitment of agencies and businesses to provide recreational opportunities to people with disabilities. Job descriptions should convey the expectation that staff works with a variety of people, including individuals with disabilities. Marketing materials such as advertisements, brochures, public service announcements, etc. should include statements concerning the availability of integrated opportunities for individuals with disabilities.
3. When hiring staff, administrators should seek out persons with experience working with individuals with disabilities and should also consider hiring persons with disabilities as instructors. Comprehensive on-going staff training programs need to be developed to train staff in (1) characteristics of specific disabilities, (2) methods for adapting teaching techniques, activities and equipment, and (3) methods for integrating people with disabilities into regular recreation programs. Program evaluation should be done continually which would indicate if program goals and objectives were being met, if programs were meeting

participant needs, and what changes could be made in programs.

4. Agencies and businesses need to be creative in order to overcome funding problems in developing programs for people with disabilities. Funding could be obtained from grants and donations, and many of the costs involved in running programs could be reduced by (1) developing programs that would not need specialized equipment, (2) sharing resources with other agencies and businesses, and (3) networking with organizations that have expertise in working with people with disabilities. Methods for reducing fees should also be developed by agencies and businesses. Such methods might include (1) a sliding fee schedule for all participants based on their ability to afford the cost of the activity, (2) a policy by which attendants needed by a person with a disability would be allowed to attend free of cost, (3) exchange of volunteer work for program fees, and (4) the development of a scholarship fund.
5. People with disabilities who are living in the community need to become educated concerning the concepts of leisure and recreation and the methods of accessing those resources that are available to them in the community. This could be done through (1) the public school system, (2) agencies serving people with disabilities and (3) advocate agencies. An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) must be developed for every child receiving special education in the public school system. An Individualized Service, Treatment or Program Plan (ISP, ITP, IPP) must be developed for adults with disabilities in clinical/rehabilitation and hospital settings, residential centers, group homes, and day centers (MacMillan, 1982; Howe-Murphy & Charboneau, 1987). The development of specific recreation skills could be incorporated into these plans along with the goal of learning about and becoming involved in community recreation programs. Throughout this process the individual could develop the skills and knowledge necessary to be able to participate in integrated community programs. Advocate agencies could act as resources for people with disabilities by disseminating information concerning recreation opportunities available in local communities.

Based on the results of the present survey and the many positive comments from recreation administrators which were included with the returned surveys, this researcher feels that there is a favorable atmosphere for developing more integrated recreational opportunities for people with disabilities. Through education of people with disabilities concerning their leisure needs and the resources available in the community, education of administrators concerning the importance of and methods of accomplishing integration, and education of staff concerning teaching integrated recreation activities, it will be possible to develop integrated recreation programs within many communities. The result will be that people with disabilities will have the same opportunity for recreation and leisure experiences as other members of the community.

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