



Commission on Leisure, Recreation & Physical Activities

Advancing the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities worldwide

Recommendations on Physical Activity and Sport for People with Disabilities

Sport brings a variety of benefits for people with disabilities.

1. Physical Activity and Sport is medicine

Regular training is important. This does not necessarily mean competitive sports but sports activities in general. Physical activity and sport correlate with a higher quality of life, because active people are more independent and more mobile. This influences the opportunities for increased participation in social life positively.

For all groups of people with disabilities there is scientific evidence that regular training has positive impact on the respiratory system, the sensory system and the muscular skeletal system emphasizing endurance, muscle strength and mobility. All around training will prevent or reduce cardiovascular disease, overweight, hypertension or diabetes. Besides this, positive impact can be achieved on the self-efficacy while being involved in sporting activities.

2. Sport is participation

Besides being an arena of participation in itself, there is a significant correlation between participation in sport on a regular basis and the ability to participate in other aspects of life. Experiences from sport are transformed to everyday life, which leads to psychosocial benefits that empower people with disabilities to enter into and participate in other contexts, like working environment or leisure time.

The following topics need to be addressed in order to implement and enhance the benefits mentioned above:

1. Rehabilitation is the starting point

All providers of rehabilitation services must ensure that a person undergoing rehabilitation is introduced and subjected to a variety of suitable sports activities as part of his/her rehabilitation process.

2. Participation rather than segregation

Sports clubs and other providers of sports activities should be open to all, with a universal design and a high degree of accessibility. By inclusion into regular sports clubs, the choice of different types of sports is increased and the distances to sports facilities are shortened and the issues of transportation are reduced.

3. Information and public awareness is crucial

In order to find the right sport or an accessible sports club or provider of sports activities, people with disabilities have to be aware of suitable venues or activity opportunities. This information must be made available to everyone and be easy to find.

To promote information about barrier-free sport facilities and sports in general it is important to create activity opportunities or events, where people can come and try out activities without contractual obligation.



4. Involvement into decision-making

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), article 30, paragraph 5, demands opportunities for people with disabilities not only to do sports, but also to participate in developing sports activities and organizations. Structures and support systems are needed to reach the goal that people with disabilities overtake responsibility.

5. Sustainable success needs time

Inclusive sports clubs and providers of sport activities need qualified and committed personnel. Sport activities need to be organized in a consistent and regular way in order to meet the demands and needs of the participants. The frequency needs to be high enough to maintain momentum and the commitment of participants.

6. Preventing injuries and illnesses is fundamental

To maintain the ability to carry out sport and stay active life long, preventive measures are fundamental. Monotonous repetitions and overusing muscles and joints must be avoided. Important measures are sufficient resting time and continuous health monitoring. After injury or illness sufficient recovery time is crucial.

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