



Minneapolis
Park & Recreation Board

**Therapeutic Recreation
Youth Division**

Parent / Guardian Handbook



MPRB COMMITMENT TO INCLUSION

Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board is committed to ensuring that our services, activities, and programs are accessible to everyone, including individuals with disabilities.

THERAPEUTIC RECREATION (TR) SERVICE AREA

Therapeutic Recreation (TR) Service Area provides support to all MPRB department's programs, activities, and events. All rules, policies and procedures for public park buildings, programs and services must be adhered to by all participants. Depending on what program / service area the participant is registered for, please follow each program areas policies and procedures for the following areas:

- drop off and pick up
- attendance communication
- code of conduct
- program cancellations
- accidents/injuries/incidents
- first aid/medical

THERAPEUTIC RECREATION (TR) MISSION

The mission of MPRB Therapeutic Recreation Services is to provide high-quality recreation and leisure experiences which contribute to the growth and development of individuals with disabilities. We are committed to fostering self-confidence, promoting physical and emotional well-being, and celebrating individual achievements.

THERAPEUTIC RECREATION (TR) SERVICE GOALS

- Provide quality therapeutic recreation services to facilitate the acquisition and improvement of recreation and leisure skills for people with disabilities.
- Enhance the development skills physically, mentally, cognitively, and socially.
- Offer experiences that foster equal and harmonizing ties between people with and without disabilities.
- Ongoing education to the community and MPRB employees.
- Developing strong partnerships with local organizations in fostering inclusive environments.
- Advocate for the rights of people with disabilities

THERAPEUTIC RECREATION (TR) – PURPOSE

Therapeutic Recreation (TR) is a process that utilizes recreation and other activity-based interventions to address the assessed needs of individuals with illnesses and/or disabling conditions.

The purpose of the TR process is to improve or maintain physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and spiritual functioning to facilitate full participation in life.

WHAT IS THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in everyday activities. The ADA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability just as other civil rights laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, and religion. The ADA guarantees that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else to enjoy employment opportunities, purchase goods and services, and participate in state and local government programs.

WHAT IS INCLUSION

- A process of an outcome of attitudes and behaviors that is receptive and accepting of all individuals.
- Having same choices and opportunities in recreation activities as people without disabilities.
- Being accepted and appreciated for who you are as a person first.
- Being with friends who share your interests, not your disability.
- Being a valued customer and welcomed participant in community recreation programs, regardless of ability level.
- Having recreation facilities and areas that are accessible and easy for everyone to use.
- Providing the necessary individual adaptations, accommodations, and supports so every person can benefit equally from a recreation experience in the community with others who have similar interests.

INCLUSION PROCESS: WHAT IS IT?

The inclusion process allows MPRB staff to gather any pertinent information about the participant with a disability to identify and provide the reasonable accommodation/support for participation in all programs/services.

Parents/guardians play a large role in the inclusion process. You know your child needs, interests, likes, and dislikes.

▪ Registration Process

When registering for programs, parents/guardians **must** check the box under the Accessibility Statement to indicate if participant needs a support/accommodation to participate in an MPRB program. Once box is checked, an alert will be sent to the TR department to initiate the intake process.

Accessibility Statement

The Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board is committed to ensuring that our services, activities, and programs are accessible to everyone, including individuals with disabilities. If participant requires accommodations, please select "Yes" below, and the Therapeutic Recreation and Inclusion Coordinator will contact you to discuss your needs.

- Yes, I would like to be contacted to discuss the supports, accommodations and/or access needs.

Please feel free to contact us at inclusion@minneapolisparcs.org if you have any immediate questions or concerns.

We require a 2-3 week notice prior to registration for any recreation program. This allows staff to identify and set up the supports and accommodations needed for participation. You may also contact the Therapeutic Recreation Supervisor and/or Therapeutic Recreation Specialist directly regarding program registrations.

Non-Registration Events/Programs: For events that require no registration, participants or their parents/caregivers can contact the TR service area directly at inclusion@minneapolisparcs.org to discuss accommodations and supports for such an event.

▪ Intake Assessment

Once registration notice is received, TR staff will connect with the participant, parents and/or guardians to identify necessary goals, supports and accommodations that may be required.

Examples of supports/accommodations may include, but not limited to:

- Inclusion Facilitator (IF) – is an additional staff person to assist participant during program. **If needed, a two (2) week notice may be needed to recruit, train, and hire an inclusion facilitator. PLEASE NOTE: an IF is provided on a case-by-case basis. If we are unable to provide an Inclusion Facilitator, the participant may not be able to attend the program unless another type of additional staff can be provided.** An additional staff person may consist of a volunteer, family member and/or PCA/respite person.
- Communication devices – use of an interpreter, a communication device and/or picture system (PECS).
- Program structure – what part of the program can be adapted: buddy system, breaking the skills down, adapting equipment, game rules/procedures, transitions times, etc.
- If participant has an IEP plan, sharing the plan with staff as well as talking with teachers will allow for successful planning.

- **Staff Training**
 - **Parent/Inclusion Facilitator meeting** – if additional staff is needed, we would set up a meeting with the parent/participant and staff person to get to know each other prior to the program and review the plan.
 - **General Staff Training** – all recreation staff / inclusion facilitators receive training on What is Inclusion; Disability Awareness / People First Language; Scenario act' and types of supports and accommodation for successful inclusion.
 - **Non-Disabled Peer Orientations** – at times participants without disabilities have questions and solutions on how to include the participant with a disability – they have real time and play focused suggestions.
- **Program implementation** – This is when the program begins, and TR staff will:
 - Monitor program by observation and/or meeting with program staff.
 - Continue to adapt and/or structure the program activities as needed for inclusion.
 - Meet and discuss with program staff and IFs to discuss any issues, suggestions, recommendation or adaptation regarding the program
 - Communicate with parents/guardians regarding at drop off and pick regarding the day.
- **Evaluation** - An evaluation form is completed by participant, parent, Inclusion Facilitator (IF) and recreation staff.

ROLE OF INCLUSION FACILITATOR / RECREATION PROGRAM STAFF

Inclusion Facilitator Role

The Inclusion Facilitator (IF) is a support person for the program leader. The IF facilitates the involvement of a person with a disability in the program to the maximum degree possible. The role of the IF **includes** the following responsibilities:

- Provide additional assistance (e.g., interpreting instructions, transitions, verbal cues, etc.) to assist the participant with a disability to learn new recreation and leisure.
- Encourage social interaction between the participant with a disability and the nondisabled participants.
- Provide positive reinforcement or other behavioral intervention (as needed) to all participants to facilitate the Inclusion for all in the group program/activity.
- Respond to any questions that may arise from the nondisabled participants or the group pleader regarding the person with a disability.
- Maintain ongoing communication with parents, rec. staff and TR team regarding participant's experience (daily, activity changes).
- Work with the program staff to adapt activities, environment, structure as needed to allow active participation for all.

The role the IF plays in inclusion programs requires a sensitivity as to when to offer the person with a disability individual assistance and when to allow the natural dynamics of group interactions and instructions to assimilate the person in the group as part of a more spontaneous process. In some situations, too much intervention from the IF can inhibit socialization and learning.

Program Leader/Instructor/Coach

A program leader can play a key role in facilitating in the inclusion process. A program leaders' feedback regarding the inclusion process is essential to ensure a positive inclusive experience for all participants.

Following are some recommendations to clarify the role a program leader play:

- Create an atmosphere of acceptance toward the person with a disability by being a role model for the group on how for the group on how to interact with the person.
- Act natural when interacting with a person with a disability. Treat the person in the same manner as you treat other participants in the program.
- When providing individual instruction, give the person with a disability the same amount of instruction as given to the other participants, even if the participant has as an IF.



- When communicating with a person with a disability, speak directly to him or her rather than the IF.
- Focus on what the person can do, and positively reinforce those behaviors to decrease the occurrence of behaviors.
- Engage in the activity as a participant and role model behavior that is positive and expected of the program.
- Role model behavior that you want to be there and care about the participants.
- Plan your day or program by providing choices (at least 3) for participants to choose from.
- Always review the behavior expectations and consequences for the day.

THERAPEUTIC RECREATION (TR) POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Procedures are followed per individual program, activity, or event, which means policies may vary. Below are specific policies for the TR inclusion program.

Program Absences

If participant will be absent, it is the responsibility of the participant, parent and/or guardian to contact the Recreation Program Staff, TR Supervisor and TR Specialist, especially if the participant has an Inclusion Facilitator (IF) for support.

- **If your child has an Inclusion Facilitator (IF)**, it is imperative to contact the TR staff **ASAP** for the following:
 - If participant will be absent or running late, and/or
 - What time you are dropping off and picking up the participant

If we do not receive a notice of absence or late drop off, and/or the participant has not showed up within the hour, the IF may be asked to leave. If participant is dropped off after the IF has left, the participant may NOT be able to stay.

Pre-Planned Program Absence

If parent has informed staff that participant will be absent for any day, and has an IF, but for some reason needs to attend the requested day(s) off, the parent must contact the Rec. Program staff, TR Supervisor and/or TR Specialist to confirm the availability of an IF. We need a 48-hour window as we will do our best to meet the requested need, but we cannot guarantee the request will be fulfilled due to staffing needs and availability.

If participant shows up on the day they are to be absent without notice, participant may not be able to attend the program based on staffing.

Therapeutic Recreation staff (IF's) are Mandated Reporters

Suspected cases of child abuse or neglect will be reported to appropriate authorities by staff. Reportable cases include a parent who is intoxicated when picking up a child at a program. Child Protection Services 612-348-3552. TR staff is legally mandated to report if they know or have reason to believe that a child has been neglected, or physically or sexually abused within the preceding three years. This is done within 24 hours to Hennepin County Child Protection or the Minneapolis Police.

Health and Safety

Please do not send your child to a program if there is evidence of any type of illness or communicable disease (i.e., COVID-19, strep throat, untreated head lice, viral infections, chicken pox, pink eye, etc.). Parents need to notify program and TR staff if their child has a contagious disease. Children will be allowed back into the program when they no longer pose a health risk.

Weather

Stay weather aware. If for any reason a program needs to be cancelled due to severe or inclement weather, program staff will contact all program participants. Please stay tuned to MPRB website posts as well.



Administration of Medication

If your child will need any medication administered (allergies or other medical conditions) during program hours, instructions in writing must be provided by a physician to program staff. Written permission on medication form must also be given by a parent or legal guardian.

- Medication and Epi pens must not be expired.
- Medicine brand name on form must match brand name on container.
- Containers must be labeled with first/last name and on Ziplock bag, dated with amount and frequency of dosage.
- Parent/legal guardian permission is needed for “over the counter” medication: cough syrup or allergy medicine.
- Description of the allergy, specific triggers, avoidance techniques, symptoms of allergic reactions and procedures for responding to an allergic reaction, must be submitted.
- Fever-reducing medication are not able to be administered at programs.

Personal Belongings

Children’s play is often messy. Dress your child in comfortable play clothes and shoes intended for the program. MPRB is not responsible for lost or stolen items. Valuable items should be left at home. A “lost and found” is available at each park. All belongings should be labeled with your child’s name. Please pack an extra pair of clothing to be left in your child’s backpack.

Behavior Management

To promote a safe environment for all participants and staff, please adhere to the behavior expectation guidelines of the program that participant is registered for. The TR team will work diligently with parents/guardians, school support staff, recreation staff and participant regarding behavior strategies to allow for successful participation.

THERAPEUTIC RECREATION SERVICE AREA STAFF

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Inclusion is not bringing people into what already exists; It is making a new space, a better space for everyone. -George Dei