

Executive Summary

The Importance of Group Leisure Participation in Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities

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Abstract

Participation in meaningful leisure activities is essential for promoting social participation, well-being, and overall quality of life (QoL) for individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID). However, individuals with ID often experience reduced access to inclusive group leisure opportunities, which contributes to decreased participation and engagement. This capstone project addresses gaps in adaptive group leisure programming within a community-based setting through program development, implementation, and evaluation of both quantitative and qualitative data. This project aimed to enhance accessibility, engagement, participation, and sustainability of group leisure opportunities for individuals with ID through the use of structured adaptation strategies and staff training. Findings support the value of structured adaptations and staff training in improving inclusive programming, increasing participation, and promoting sustainability in community-based settings.

EXPLANATION OF THE BRIEF

This capstone project describes the development, implementation, and evaluation of an adaptive group leisure program at the Developmental Center of the Ozarks (DCO). The project involved designing and implementing structured group leisure sessions using activity adaptations, environmental modifications, and activity grading to support participation for individuals with ID.

Problem & Purpose

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Individuals with ID have reduced group leisure participation opportunities for social participation which results in diminished social and emotional health and QoL (Borland et al., 2020; Lohani et al., 2021; Ristevski et al., 2024).

PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of this *Program Development and Evaluation* type capstone project is to increase group leisure opportunities for individuals with ID for engagement in social participation. This capstone will result in improved social and emotional health and QoL for individuals with ID. As a result, this capstone intends to evaluate program effectiveness for community-based organizations serving individuals with ID and expand program opportunities for group leisure and social participation. This capstone will serve as a platform for training staff and educating parents in adaptive group leisure programming. Lastly, this capstone aims to provide current community resource networking to support families.

Methods

An adaptive group leisure program was developed and implemented at DCO. Activities were modified to support varying skill levels and promote participation and engagement.

Program included:

- Two staff training workshops
- Two structured adaptive group leisure activities
 - Adaptive Bowling
 - Adaptive Volleyball

Evaluation Plan and Outcome Measures

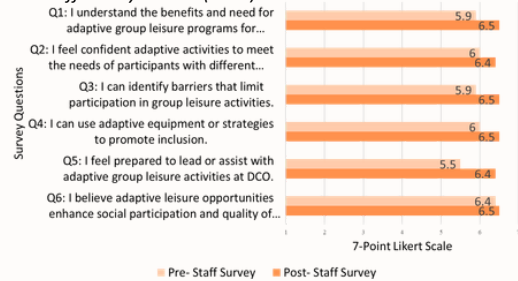
- Pre- and post- program staff surveys (see **Figure 1**)
- Attendance and observation logs
- Program satisfaction surveys (see **Figure 2-4**)

The capstone experience included developing resources and staff training procedures for DCO to support adaptive leisure participation and expand inclusive programming opportunities.

Results

Figure 1

Mean Pre- and Post- Staff Survey Results (n=21)

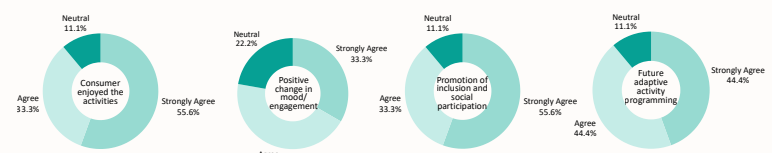


Note. Pre- and post- results from staff surveys utilized before Staff Training Workshop #1 and after Staff Training Workshop #2. Survey questions are rated on a 7-Point Likert Scale, 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Somewhat Disagree, 4= Neutral, 5= Somewhat Agree, 6= Agree, 7= Strongly Agree.

Figure 2

Caregiver Satisfaction Survey Results

Caregiver Satisfaction Survey (n = 9)

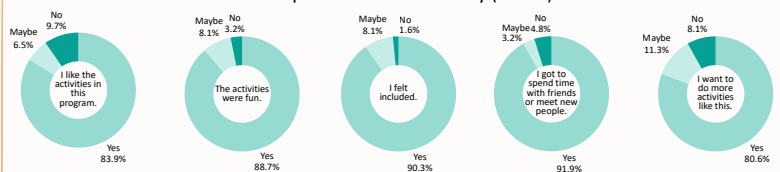


Note. Caregiver satisfaction survey results were distributed after the adaptive leisure program. Survey questions are rated on a 7-Point Likert Scale, 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Somewhat Disagree, 4= Neutral, 5= Somewhat Agree, 6= Agree, 7= Strongly Agree.

Figure 3

Participant Satisfaction Survey Results

Participant Satisfaction Survey (n = 62)

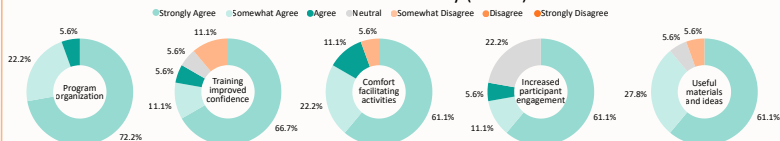


Note. Participant satisfaction survey results were distributed after the adaptive leisure program. Survey questions are rated on a 3-Point Likert Scale: Yes, Maybe, No.

Figure 4

Staff Satisfaction Survey Results

Staff Satisfaction Survey (n = 18)



Note. Staff satisfaction survey results were distributed after the adaptive leisure program. Results are presented as percentages of respondents for each item on a 7-Point Likert Scale, 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Somewhat Disagree, 4= Neutral, 5= Somewhat Agree, 6= Agree, 7= Strongly Agree.

Key Findings

- All survey areas showed improvement from pre- to post-workshop
- Staff reported increased knowledge and confidence in leading adaptive leisure activities
- ≥77.8% of responses were positive (Agree / Somewhat Agree / Strongly Agree) across organization, training, feasibility, and implementation
- ≥80.6% of participants reported positive experiences
- ≥77.7% of caregivers reported positive changes in participants
- 64 consumers participated in one or both activities
- Over time, participants showed increased participation, independence, confidence, and skill development

LIMITATIONS

- Limited implementation timeframe
- Staff-reported measures may introduce response bias
- Absence of follow-up data limits evaluation of long-term sustainability

Clinical Bottom Line

Adaptive group leisure programming is an effective approach to promoting participation, inclusion, and QoL for individuals with ID. Staff Training and structured resources enhance program sustainability and support implementation. OT practitioners play a key role in developing and leading inclusive, evidence-based leisure programming.

NEXT STEPS

- Expand adaptive leisure programming, resources, and staff training to additional settings and programs
- Increase caregiver involvement to support carryover of skills and participation outside of day programming
- Further evaluate long-term outcomes related to participation, engagement, and QoL
- Explore additional opportunities for adaptive leisure programming

Implications for Occupational Therapy

This capstone supports AOTA Vision 2030 by advancing OT as an evidence-based profession that promotes health, well-being, and QoL for all (AOTA, 2020). By addressing barriers to adaptive leisure, this project advances health equity and occupational justice. Research shows that leisure participation improves social skills, self-satisfaction, and overall well-being for individuals with ID (Alanazi, 2023; Borland et al., 2020).

- **Practice:** OT practitioners can implement adaptive group leisure programs to increase participation, engagement, and QoL for individuals with ID. The use of task modification and graded activity approaches supports inclusion and occupational performance.
- **Education:** Education programs should incorporate training in adaptive leisure programming, activity analysis, and facilitation strategies to improve future readiness when implementing inclusive programming.
- **Advocacy:** This program highlights the role of OT in promoting equitable access to meaningful leisure opportunities. OT practitioners can advocate for inclusive community programming that supports participation for individuals with ID.
- **Leadership:** OTs can support the implementation and sustainability of adaptive leisure programming by allocating resources for staff training, program development, and interdisciplinary collaboration within community settings.



Link to Capstone
Oral Defense



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