

*Vermont is home to many programs that provide recreational and social opportunities for people with disabilities.*

## Recreation for Children and Young Adults with Disabilities

Children and young adults with disabilities deserve access to recreation programs just as anyone else in the community. Staying active and pursuing interests is not only healthy but also provides a good way to foster social interactions.

Participating in programs such as camps, Special Olympics, adapted dance classes, or therapeutic horseback riding can keep a young person active while providing a community of peers who share similar interests. For some children on Individualized Educational Programs (IEP), summer programs can be a part of Extended Year Services (ESY). Families should discuss ESY with their child's team well before the end of the school year. Here are some ways to find recreational opportunities both in and out of school.

### Finding a Program

The search for an appropriate recreational program should be driven by the child or youth's interests, abilities and need for supports. Families can start by asking their school team for information. Many schools offer Unified Sports and after-school programs during the school year. Some provide summer programs for children on education plans.

Local recreation departments, YMCAs or youth centers, such as the Boys and Girls Club, are good resources for out-of-school programs. Community enrichment classes often include fun, hands-on activities like cooking, dance, and pottery that may be of interest to an older child or young adult. Pediatricians may be aware of specialized recreation programs for various disabilities as well as chronic illnesses. Talking with other families can be very helpful when looking for recreational activities. Call Vermont Family Network for other ideas.

### Questions to Ask

Safety is always the first concern for any young person involved in a recreation program. Here are some good questions to ask when researching programs:

- What is the ratio of staff to participants?
- Is there an emergency plan and is staff trained in CPR and First Aid?
- Is staff trained to work with participants who have special needs?

- How will medications be dispensed?
- Is the facility accessible?
- Can the camp give you references from other parents?
- Are therapeutic components covered by insurance?

For children and young adults with significant needs, families may want to look for programs that offer therapeutic activities, such as occupational or physical therapy, sensory integration, and behavior management. If the young person has an aide, it is important to be clear about the aide's role in the program.

## Resources

### Arts Programs

#### North End Studios

Adaptive International Folk Dancing  
802-863-6713

#### VSA Vermont

Skill-building classes and workshops in a variety of artistic genres to people of all ages and abilities around the state.  
802-871-5002

### Camps

#### Camp Thorpe

Summer residential camp  
802-247-6611

#### Camp Rainbow

Summer day camp  
800-524-6554

#### Easter Seals Camps

Summer residential camp  
603-364-5818

#### Partners in Adventure

Day camps  
802-425-2638

### Hiking/Camping

#### VT Dept. of Forests, Parks, & Recreation

Accessible activities  
802-828-1294

### Programs and Events

#### Inclusion Center

Drop in activities  
802-387-5285

#### Kids VT parenting magazine and calendar

802-985-5482

#### Zach's Place

Community Enrichment center  
802-457-5868

### Self-Advocacy

Green Mountain Self-Advocates of VT  
802-229-2600

### Sports

#### AbilityPLUS Adaptive Sports

800-287-8415 x103

#### Bart J Ruggiere Adaptive Sports Center

802-824-6849

#### Northeast Disabled Athletic Association

802-862-6322

#### Special Olympics Vermont

800-639-1603

#### Vermont Adaptive Ski & Sports

802-786-4991

### Therapeutic Horseback Riding Stables

#### Champlain Adaptive Mounted Program

802-372-4087

#### Dream On Curls Riding Center

802-885-4126

#### High Horses at Schleicher Farm

802-763-3280

#### Rhythm of the Rein

802-426-3781



Vermont  
Family  
Network

We are happy to hear that our materials are appreciated and used by others. To order copies of this fact sheet, or to learn more about VFN's materials and services, please contact us at:

**1 800-800-4005**

Published  
June 2017