

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 enjoy recreational and social activities, just like anyone else in the community. Staying active and pursuing interests is a great way to develop healthy habits and to foster friendships.

Participating in camps and recreational programs such as Special Olympics, adaptive sports, or therapeutic horseback riding can keep a young person active while providing a community of peers who share similar interests. For some children who have an Individualized Educational Program (IEP), summer programs can be a part of Extended School 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 ideas. Many schools offer Unified Sports and after-school programs. Some provide summer programs for children with an IEP and some offer affordable summer camps for all children.

Local recreation departments, the YMCA, or youth centers, such as the Boys and Girls Club, are good resources to find non-school programs.

Community enrichment offerings may include hands-on activities such as art, cooking, dance, or science to cater to special interests, or for your child to try something new. The care coordinator in your child's pediatric office or case manager at their designated agency may know of other specialized recreation programs for children with disabilities or chronic illness. To generate more ideas, talk with other families or with a Family Support Consultant at Vermont Family Network. New programs are always coming along and old ones are becoming more inclusive.

Questions to Ask

Safety is always a first concern for anyone attending a camp or recreation program. Here are some questions to ask during your research.

- What is the ratio of staff to participants?
- Is the facility accessible?
- Can the camp give you references from other parents?

- Are therapeutic components covered by insurance?
- Can medications be administered by staff?
- Is staff trained in CPR and First Aid and are they trained to support children of differing abilities?

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 support. If the young person has an aide, it is important to be clear about the aide's role in the program.

Resources

Vermont Family Network Camps List
<https://www.vermontfamilynetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Camp-List-2023.pdf>

VFN Support and Social Groups List
<https://www.vermontfamilynetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Support-Groups-in-Vermont-March-2023.pdf>

Inclusive Arts Vermont
<https://www.inclusiveartsvermont.org/>

Adaptive Dance-Montpelier
<https://vermontdance.org/class/adaptive-dance-young-dancers>

Adaptive Dance-South Burlington:
<http://www.spotlightvermont.com/adaptive-dance-class>

Adaptive Skiing in Vermont
<https://skivermont.com/adaptive-programs-at-vermont-ski-areas>

Team Impact
<https://www.teamimpact.org/>

Playgroups in VT for young children at the regional Parent Child Center
<https://vtparentchildcenternetwork.org/centers/>

Programs and Events

Inclusion Center-Brattleboro
<https://www.inclusioncentervermont.org/> 802-387-5285

Zack's Place A Community Enrichment Center-Woodstock
<https://zacksplacevt.org/> 802-457-5868

Year-Round Sports

Green Mountain Adaptive Sports
<https://greenmtnadaptive.org/>

Northeast Disabled Athletic Association
<https://disabledathletics.org/> 802-862-6322

Special Olympics Vermont
<https://www.specialolympicsvermont.org/> 800-639-1603

Vermont Adaptive Ski & Sports
<https://www.vermontadaptive.org/> 802-786-4991

Adaptive Skiing in Vermont
<https://skivermont.com/adaptive-programs-at-vermont-ski-areas>

Therapeutic Horseback Riding
 Interactive database to find a program
<https://pathintl.org/find-a-program/>

Top Soccer programs in Vermont
<https://www.vermontsoccer.org/topsoccer-main/>

Accessible Trails in Vermont
<https://www.greenmountainclub.org/hiking/accessible-trails/>

Vermont Natural Resources
<https://fpr.vermont.gov/recreation/activities/accessible-activities>

National Parks Access Pass
<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/accessibility/interagency-access-pass.htm>



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