

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



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