

On their pathway in life, young people often participate in a variety of extracurricular activities, from sports to clubs to internships. But for youth with disabilities, opportunities may be few or available only in segregated settings.

This publication is designed as a guide to expanding those opportunities by helping you—as a youth program leader or volunteer—learn how to make your organization fully accessible to all young people. In many cases, the adjustments needed are modest and low-cost, yet may have a big impact. By being inclusive, you might help a young person with a disability get on the path to a productive, happy and independent life.

Thanks to the pioneering work of organizations like those in the Inclusion Task Force, there's a wide range of inclusion resources and best practices to draw on. Inclusion is the right thing to do, and the best time to start is **RIGHT NOW!**



1560 Wilson Blvd., Suite 1150 • Arlington, VA 22209
www.meaf.org

Table of Contents

Working toward inclusion

I. What is Inclusion? 1

Inclusion is an attitude and approach
Case in Point: Disability basics
Trail Marker: Common disabilities

II. Why Inclusion?..... 3

Inclusion is the right thing to do
Case in Point: Everyone benefits
Trail Marker: Person-first language

III. How does inclusion happen? 5

Inclusion is a process
Case in Point: Inclusion begins with “I”
Trail Marker: 7 Steps of Inclusion

IV. Where is inclusion happening? 7

Inclusion is happening now
Case in Point: More than just ramps
Resources: An organizational assessment

LOOKING FOR RESOURCES? 9

Education, Out-of-School Time Programs & Leadership

Mentoring, Internships & Employment

Independent Living, Disability, Inclusion & Funding or visit www.IncludingAllKids.org for all of your inclusion questions



Paths to Inclusion is designed to give you the resources you need to provide inclusive opportunities.



Inclusion is an attitude and approach

In-clu-sion (in-kloo-zhun), n – an attitude and approach that seeks to ensure that every person, regardless of ability or background, can meaningfully participate in all aspects of life.

Inclusion means:

- offering the same opportunities for people with and without disabilities
- welcoming everyone
- building community
- emphasizing cooperation
- seeking to understand and accommodate differences
- providing a safe and socially comfortable environment for all
- teaching respect, understanding and dignity to people of all abilities
- embracing changes that facilitate full participation
- actively reaching out to people who are traditionally excluded or marginalized
- fostering a sense of belonging to community as a respected and valued peer
- honoring the intrinsic value of each person's life.

Inclusion is an approach, not a program.

An attitude, not an activity.

Inclusion is **belonging!**



"I DIDN'T KNOW THAT SOMEONE IN A WHEELCHAIR COULD DO SO MUCH! I LEARNED THAT THE ONLY LIMITATIONS WE HAVE ARE LIMITS WE PUT ON OURSELVES."

Mike speaking about a friend at camp

SOURCES:
 Ace Disability
www.acedisability.org.au/inclusion/
 CAST
www.CAST.org
 Kids Included Together
www.kitonline.org
 Inclusion Network
www.inclusion.com
 TASH
www.TASH.org
 Wilderness Inquiry
www.wildernessinquiry.org



Case in Point: Disability basics

What is Asperger's syndrome? How can I communicate with a deaf child? What snacks can we serve kids with diabetes? What about restrooms for children in wheelchairs?

There are many questions that naturally arise when you first consider bringing youth with disabilities into your organization. You don't have to be a disability expert but there are resources that provide information you may need to understand the general characteristics of specific disabilities ([see Trail Marker](#)).

The most important point is to identify what accommodations, if any, the child might need. An accommodation is any item or action that helps the individual fit in and fully participate. Glasses, hearing aids, and wheelchairs are some common accommodations. Others might include using pictures instead of verbal descriptions, reading instructions aloud, or making sure ramps are available at access points.

The kids themselves and their parents can usually tell you exactly what accommodations they need. Keep in mind that the ADA does not obligate you to fundamentally change a program if the expense is unreasonable or to offer personal services unless they are normally provided to all.

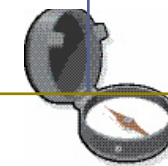


Brownies learn about reading Braille from Mikaila, who is visually impaired.



TRAIL MARKER

Common disabilities



KNOWLEDGE OF COMMON DISABILITY TRAITS CAN BE HELPFUL.

WILDERNESS INQUIRY HAS DEVELOPED A DATABASE OF DISABILITIES THAT ARE COMMON AMONG YOUTH.

THE DATABASE GIVES A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF 40 TYPES OF DISABILITY, WITH LINKS TO MORE INFORMATION, TO DEEPEN UNDERSTANDING OF A DISABILITY. REMEMBER THAT EACH INDIVIDUAL IS UNIQUE, AND WHILE THERE MAY BE TYPICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF A DISABILITY, EACH PERSON MAY HAVE DIFFERENT NEEDS... OR POSSIBLY NONE AT ALL.

TO LINK TO THE DATABASE, VISIT:

WWW.INCLUDINGALLKIDS.ORG/DISABILITY_INFO

SOURCE: WWW.WILDERNESSINQUIRY.ORG/PROGRAMS/SCOUTS/YOUTH_DISABILITIES.PHP

Inclusion is the right thing to do

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 54 million Americans—one in five—have a disability. And through birth, accident, age or illness, nearly everyone will experience disability during their lifetime. In order to protect the rights of people with disabilities, Congress passed a law in 1990—the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The ADA is most often associated with curb cuts and accessible bathrooms, but it also mandates that public programs be accessible. Program providers can learn about the ADA and other laws by visiting www.IncludingAllKids.org. But inclusion is more than just laws. Laws cannot mandate attitudes or commitment. Inclusion is the ethical and moral thing to do.

Compared to youth without disabilities, twice as many young people with disabilities live in poverty and twice as many drop out of high school, with a significant number ending up in prison. These numbers are sobering, but should not be discouraging. Studies indicate that when youth with disabilities are given the opportunity to participate in community activities, such statistical trends can be reversed.

By using some of the ideas and best practices cited in this publication, you can begin to make change happen.



"I WAS TOLD BY A LOT OF PEOPLE, 'YOU CAN'T DO ADVENTUROUS THINGS. BE REALISTIC, YOU'RE BLIND.' BUT WILDERNESS INQUIRY GAVE ME A CHANCE TO PROVE THEM WRONG. NOT ONLY DID I PARTICIPATE, BUT I GOT TO LEAD THE GROUP THROUGH A CAVE."

- Mia talking about her experience caving



Wilderness Inquiry

Case in Point: Everyone benefits

By dispelling myths and working to reduce real and attitudinal barriers to inclusion, program providers quickly discover that everyone benefits from inclusion.

- Myth:** Inclusion costs too much.
Reality: Inclusion is mandated by law, so it should be considered a cost of doing business; however, most accommodations are actually low cost, and often the young person already has the adaptive equipment he or she needs.
- Myth:** Including kids with disabilities will compromise the quality of the program for others.
Reality: Time and again, inclusion is shown to benefit all youth and raise program quality overall.
- Myth:** If a young person has a certain type of disability, there are things he or she can't do.
Reality: While there may be traits typical of specific disabilities, every individual is unique. Always start by assuming someone can do something. And always respect the person's individuality. That starts with using person-first language ([see Trail Marker](#)).



Often people with cognitive disabilities are placed in low-skill, set-aside jobs, but not Annie. She works at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center performing a complex, competitive job. Annie lives independently and earns her paycheck, just like everyone else.



TRAIL MARKER

Person-first language

Words are powerful! Words reflect our feelings and thoughts. When speaking about a person with a disability always put the person first and stress people's abilities. It is not about political correctness, it is about respect and dignity.

Say...	Instead of...
Person with a disability	The handicapped
Tom has autism	He's autistic
Sarah is a little person	She's a dwarf/midget
Jim uses a wheelchair	He's wheelchair bound
She needs...	She has special needs
Kids without disabilities	Normal/typical kids

SOURCE: www.disabilityisnatural.com ADAPTED AND USED WITH PERMISSION.

Inclusion is a process

Inclusion is a process, not a program. Anyone in an organization can begin to promote the full inclusion of people with disabilities. But to truly become an inclusive organization, it takes commitment from the top-down and the bottom-up.

The board and executive staff need to ensure that the mission statement contains language about serving “all children,” and that policies and procedures reflect that spirit. Staff and volunteers must understand, embrace, and communicate the value of inclusion.

Collaboration is another key to successful inclusion. Companies and foundations in your community may be willing to provide funding for facility accommodations and staff training. Disability organizations, such as Easter Seals or United Cerebral Palsy, can provide referrals and training, and partnerships with local schools can lead to shared resources and equipment. And don’t overlook the importance of partnering with families. Family members can give you suggestions and feedback on accommodating specific needs and may be willing to serve as organizational volunteers.

Inclusion happens through collaboration and commitment to serving all children.



“MY ROLE AS A DISABLED SPORTS/ USA MENTOR...GAVE ME A NEW AND INSPIRING PERSPECTIVE ON HOW I CAN IMPACT THE LIVES OF OTHER PEOPLE.

“I WANTED TO REACH OUT AND PROVIDE ARIEL WITH MOTIVATION AND STRENGTH AND AT THE SAME TIME, ARIEL INSPIRED ME WITH HER DETERMINATION AND COURAGE. THE RELATIONSHIPS THE DS/USA MENTORING PROGRAM WILL CREATE ARE GOING TO LAST AND MAKE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE FOR EVERYONE.”

- Leslie, a retired US Army Captain speaks of his experience as a mentor



Case in Point: Inclusion begins with “I”

Inclusion begins with “I.” So ask yourself: “What can I do to help make my organization more inclusive?” The key is to start with the individual.

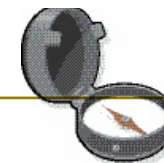
First, determine each individual’s needs and strengths. Then, balance those needs and utilize those strengths to develop a quality experience for the group. This process will help put your organization on the path to creating an environment where group goals are achieved in a safe and fun manner, and each individual is welcomed, respected, and fully engaged.



Margo, using a wheelchair, and Steve, with cerebral palsy, form a symbiotic relationship to cross terrain neither could navigate alone.



Creating solutions, changing lives.



TRAIL MARKER

7 Steps of Inclusion

- 1: Respect each person's dignity:** When individuals know they are valued, they will more readily help attain group goals.
- 2: Maintain open lines of communication:** Encourage frank and honest discussion about needs and expectations, while respecting confidentiality.
- 3: Promote integrated decision making:** The group can help develop solutions to meet needs, with each individual becoming invested in the decision making process.
- 4: Emphasize all contributions:** Individuals should each have a role, recognizing contributions when their ability is used.
- 5: Focus on group challenges and activities:** Emphasize cooperation vs. competition with a positive attitude.
- 6: Identify and delegate tasks:** Break tasks into steps; ensure each task is a legitimate function; set people up for success.
- 7: Develop symbiotic relationships:** Identify complementary individual strengths, matching peers to achieve group goals.

SOURCE: WWW.WILDERNESSINQUIRY.ORG ADAPTED AND USED WITH PERMISSION.

Inclusion is happening now

A number of youth-serving organizations are developing programs and practices to attract and accommodate youth with disabilities. Following is a partial list. You can find examples of successful strategies at www.IncludingAllKids.org.

Big Brothers Big Sisters
Boy Scouts of America
Boys & Girls Clubs of America
Camp Fire USA
Chabot Space and Science Center
City Year
Girl Scouts of the USA
Imagination Stage
Jewish Community Centers of Chicago
Mass Mentoring
Minnesota Conservation Corps

National 4-H Council
National AfterSchool Association
National Recreation and Park Association
National Wildlife Federation
Operation Fresh Start
The After-School Corporation
The Corps Network
The Washington Center
Utah Conservation Corps
Wilderness Inquiry
YMCA



"SINCE TAKING A MORE INCLUSIVE APPROACH TO MARKETING, WE HAVE SEEN AN INCREASE IN MEMBERSHIP OF KIDS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE BOYS & GIRLS CLUB. MAKING A FEW SMALL CHANGES HAS MADE THE CLUB MORE WELCOMING.

"KIDS WITH AND WITHOUT DISABILITIES HAVE FORMED NEW AND LASTING FRIENDSHIPS...CREATING AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT IS TEACHING OUR CHILDREN TO EMBRACE THE DIVERSE COMMUNITY IN WHICH WE ALL LIVE."

- Kelly, speaking about the Boys & Girls Club she directs



Case in Point: More than just ramps

Children and their families should feel welcome from the minute they walk in your door, look at your website, or open your brochure. Some examples of ways to help create a welcoming environment:

- Assess your facility to ensure it is accessible. Remove barriers and make modifications that reflect inclusive practices.
- Ensure that children and adults with disabilities are represented in print and web material. Show photos of real-life inclusion.
- Have your website reviewed to ensure that it meets accessibility standards (<http://webxact.watchfire.com/>).
- Provide marketing materials and application forms in alternative formats (such as Braille, large print, and on CD).
- Educate staff and volunteers about inclusion and make inclusion a part of all trainings.

TRAIL MARKER

An organizational assessment

RECRUITMENT: ARE ALL MADE TO FEEL WELCOME?

- ☐ Marketing materials reflect inclusion
- ☐ Website is accessible
- ☐ Materials available in different formats

FACILITY: CAN EVERYONE BE INCLUDED?

- ☐ Building is accessible
- ☐ Restrooms are accessible
- ☐ Equipment is adapted
- ☐ Public/accessible transportation is available

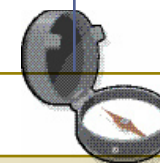
PROGRAM: IS EVERYONE PREPARED FOR INCLUSION?

- ☐ staff and volunteers are trained
- ☐ policies/procedures promote inclusiveness
- ☐ activities are adapted to include all
- ☐ peer support/friendships are facilitated
- ☐ accomplishments are recognized
- ☐ curriculum is designed for universal access

SOURCE: WWW.KITONLINE.ORG ADAPTED AND USED WITH PERMISSION.



Using a respectful, but inexpensive accommodation, Erin participates in a hike with her friends.





www.IncludingAllKids.org features links to these and other inclusion resources.

EDUCATION

National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities

Central source for disability-related education information www.nichcy.org

George Washington University

HEATH Resource Center online clearinghouse for post-secondary education for individuals with disabilities www.heath.gwu.edu/

LEADERSHIP

National Consortium on Leadership & Development for Youth

Youth-led resource, information, and training center for youth and emerging leaders with developmental disabilities www.iel.org/programs/ncldy.html

National Youth Leadership Network

National voice for young leaders with disabilities www.nyln.org

OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME

Kids Included Together National Training Center on Inclusion

Providing inclusion best practices training for community-based youth organizations www.kitonline.org

SPORTS

Disabled Sports/USA

Offers sports rehabilitation programs, partnering with Big Brother Big Sisters on a sports mentoring program www.dsusa.org

Special Olympics

Engaging youth with and without developmental disabilities through unified sports programs www.specialolympics.org

OUTDOOR RECREATION

Inclusive Recreation Resource Center SUNY Cortland

Promoting participation by people with disabilities in inclusive recreation activities www.cortland.edu/nysirrc/

National Institute on Recreation Inclusion

Sponsored by the National Recreation and Park Association, NIRI offers an opportunity to learn about the inclusion process in recreational settings www.nrpa.org/niri

National Wildlife Federation

Happenin' Habitats teaches teachers and students how to create an accessible outdoor classroom. <http://happeninhabitats.pwnet.org>

Wilderness Inquiry

Adventure programs for people of all ages, skill levels, and abilities www.wildernessinquiry.org

VOLUNTEERING & SERVICE

National Service Inclusion Project

Provides technical assistance to national service program providers www.serviceandinclusion.org

The Corps Network

National association of service crews offering an Inclusive Crew Model www.corpsnetwork.org

MENTORING

Partners for Youth with Disabilities

Mentoring programs for youth with disabilities www.pyd.org

INTERNSHIPS

Emerging Leaders

Summer Internships for youth with disabilities www.emerging-leaders.com

MEAF-AAPD Congressional Internships & Microsoft-AAPD Federal IT Internships

Placing college students with disabilities in summer internships in Washington, DC www.aapd.com

Youth to Work Coalition

Sponsored by the US Business Leadership Network, the YWC promotes internships and mentoring opportunities for youth with disabilities www.usbln.org/youthtowork/default.aspx

EMPLOYMENT

Career Opportunities for Students with Disabilities

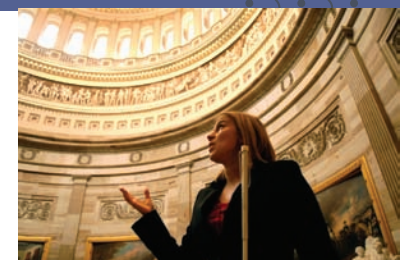
Career planning services for college students with disabilities www.cosdonline.org/

Job Accommodation Network

Free consulting service that provides information on accommodations and disability employment www.jan.owvu.edu

Project SEARCH

Unique employment training for youth and adults with cognitive disabilities www.cincinnatichildrens.org/ps



As a college student, Stacy interned on Capitol Hill through the MEAF-AAPD Congressional Internship Program. After graduating she was hired as a Legislative Correspondent for Senator Brownback of Kansas. Stacy, who is blind, leads tours of the U.S. Capitol Building among her other legislative duties.





Inclusive mentoring & internships can help kids prepare for work, careers & independent living

COMPANIES SUCH AS **MITSUBISHI ELECTRIC** AND **MICROSOFT** OFFER MENTORS AND INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS WHICH CAN HELP YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO WORK. **BOSTON-BASED PARTNERS FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES (PYD)** HAS DEVELOPED A FREE GUIDEBOOK, **BEST PRACTICES FOR MENTORING YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES** TO HELP ORGANIZATIONS IMPLEMENT INCLUSIVE MENTORING OPPORTUNITIES: WWW.PYD.ORG/NATIONAL-CENTER/INDEX.HTM.

DISABILITY

DisabilityInfo.gov

Comprehensive resource on governmental services available to people with disabilities
www.disabilityinfo.gov

Easter Seals

Dedicated to helping children and adults with disabilities attain greater independence
www.easterseals.com

INDEPENDENT LIVING

National Council on Independent Living

National association of independent living centers
www.ncil.org

TASH

Membership association that promotes the full inclusion of people with disabilities in society www.tash.org

INCLUSION

Including All Kids

Comprehensive listings of youth-related inclusion resources and best-practices www.includingallkids.org

Inclusion Network

Cincinnati-based umbrella group working to raise awareness of inclusion www.inclusion.org

DISABILITY FUNDING

Disability Funders Network

An affinity group of disability funders
www.disabilityfunders.org



Boys & Girls Clubs of America

MARVIN LASTER

City of Eden Prairie, MN

CARLA KRESS

The Corps Network

SALLY PROUTY • KARA SMITH

Girl Scouts of the USA

KATE GOTTLIEB

George Washington University

CAROL KOCHHAR-BRYANT

The HSC Foundation

RYAN EASTERLY

Kids Included Together

TORRIE DUNLAP

Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation

KEVIN R. WEBB

SUNY Cortland

LYNN ANDERSON

TASH

BARB TRADER

Wilderness Inquiry

GREG LAIS • AMY SANDEEN



Utah Conservation Crew Leader Andy (pictured in the wheelchair) oversees Americorps volunteers doing campsite accessibility work for the US Forest Service as part of The Corps Network's inclusive service crew project.



About The Inclusion Task Force

The Inclusion Task Force grew out of the Inclusion Initiative launched by the **Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation** in 2003. Comprising nearly \$6 million in grants and leveraged funds invested in two dozen youth programs, the Initiative has impacted the lives of thousands of youth with and without disabilities across the US.

The members of the Task Force come from community-based and national organizations serving youth and people with disabilities, as well as from universities, foundations and the public sector. **Paths to Inclusion** reflects their experience, expertise, and collaborative efforts.



**PARTNERS™ FOR
YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES**



IncludingAllKids.org
Beyond Participation

TO ORDER ADDITIONAL COPIES OF
PATHS TO INCLUSION VISIT
WWW.INCLUDINGALLKIDS.ORG

PATHS

To INCLUSION



A resource guide
for fully including
Youth of ALL abilities
in community life.