PATHS

TO INCLUSION

a resource guide
for fully including
youth of ALL abilities
in community life

O n 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. Through inclusion, you can help a young person with a disability get on the path to a productive, and fulfilling life.

Thanks to the pioneering work of organizations such as those featured in this brochure, 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!**

The Trail for All
Offering people with disabilities access to the wonder of nature

(dedicated 2007, with thanks to an anonymous donor & constant friend)

PHOTO BY MELISSA ROEDER

A publication of the

MITSUBISHI ELECTRIC AMERICA
foundation

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www.meaf.org

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Working toward inclusion

Visit **www.IncludingAllKids.org**
for all of your inclusion questions

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

NATIONAL 4-H COUNCIL

IncludingAllKids**.org**

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

Kids Included Together.

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.

Girl Scouts.
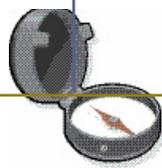
TRAIL MARKER

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.

PHOTO BY GREG LAIS

"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 supports herself through her work.

Project | SEARCH
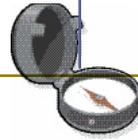
TRAIL MARKER

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

DISABLED SPORTS USA

Since 1967

"IF I CAN DO THIS, I CAN DO ANYTHING."

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. Implementing the Seven Steps of Inclusion **(see TRAIL MARKER)** will help your organization on the path to create an environment where group goals are achieved in a safe and fun manner, and each individual is welcomed, respected, and fully engaged.
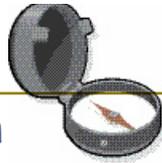

PHOTO BY GREG LAIS

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

NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION®

TRAIL MARKER

Seven 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 developed by these organizations at **www.IncludingAllKids.org.**

Academy for Educational Development	*National 4-H Council*
Big Brothers Big Sisters	*National AfterSchool Association*
Boy Scouts of America	*National Recreation and Park Association*
Boys & Girls Clubs of America	*National Wildlife Federation*
Camp Fire USA	*Operation Fresh Start*
Chabot Space and Science Center	*The After-School Corporation*
City Year	*The Corps Network*
Girl Scouts of the USA	*The Washington Center*
Imagination Stage	*Utah Conservation Corps*
Mass Mentoring	*Wilderness Inquiry*
Minnesota Conservation Corps	*YMCA*

BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF AMERICA

"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."

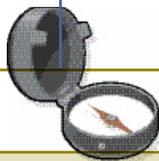*- Kelly, speaking about the Boys & Girls Club she directs*

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 **(see TRAIL MARKER).**

- 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.

Using a simple and inexpensive accommodation, Erin participates in a hike with her friends.

Girl Scouts.

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
- ❏ 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.*

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

SPORTS

Disabled Sports/USA
Offers sports rehabilitation and youth 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
Offers 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 and conservation 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 Coaltion
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.

AAPD
American Association of People with Disabilities

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.

PARTNERS™ FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

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

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

DISABILITY

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

Disability Funders Network
An affinity group of disability funders www.disabilityfunders.org

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

United Cerebral Palsy (UCP)
Leading source of information on cerebral palsy and offers comprehensive resources for persons with any disability. www.ucp.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

PHOTO BY KEVIN WEBB

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 crew project.

The CorpsNetwork
Strengthening America through service and conservation

About The Inclusion Task Force

The Inclusion Task Force grew out of the Inclusion Initiative launched by the **Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation** in 2003. With 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.

Paths to Inclusion

IncludingAllKids.org

To download or order
Paths to Inclusion visit
www.IncludingAllKids.org