

Position Statement  
**RECREATION**

---

**We anchor our position on recreation in Article 23 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and are guided by the global movement we are part of through Inclusion Canada and Inclusion International.**

Recreation is a fundamental part of a healthy and fulfilling life. Recreation is not just sport or being physically active. It includes being part of the cultural life of our communities. It includes our social, creative, spiritual or volunteer activities. Recreation fosters belonging, breaks down social barriers, and creates shared spaces where all people can thrive.

Inclusive access to recreation across the lifespan, is more than a privilege, it is a right. It requires intentionally designing programs that welcome and support everyone, regardless of ability; programs that reflect the diversity and richness of our communities. Individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families play a vital role in advocating for inclusion and supporting participation.

Recreation that is inclusive IS

- Programming (formal and informal) that is flexible enough to enable participation for all
- Program leaders and supervisors with training in inclusive practices, who have the systemic support to include and help everyone to participate in their own way
- The provision of support and accommodations, as necessary, for people to participate and engage
- Engaging people with disabilities in designing, improving and providing feedback on recreation and leisure programming

People with intellectual disabilities are often excluded from mainstream recreation. It is common for children to be denied entry or removed from programs and for adults to be isolated or never given a real chance to engage. Most recreation programs are not designed with inclusion in mind, leading to segregated or infantilizing activities that restrict choice and do not reflect individual interests and abilities. Additional barriers include financial limitations, lack of accessible transportation and limited awareness of available opportunities.

Recreation that is inclusive IS NOT

- Separate or parallel programs where people are grouped based solely on their disability
- Integration of people with disabilities into existing programs without deliberate and meaningful planning to ensure that everyone can fully and meaningfully participate
- Providing a limited number of spots designated for people with disabilities
- An afterthought or add-on to existing programs, limited to occasional or tokenized opportunities, or dependent on the level of support required by an individual

When communities commit to inclusive practices, they create spaces where everyone belongs, contributes and thrives. Recreation that is inclusive is not just an individual right but benefits everyone. Inclusion must be intentional, embedded in design and responsive to diverse needs and identities of all participants.

**Being included in recreation and the cultural life of our communities leads to inclusive lives.**