From Policy to Play: Policies supporting participation in leisure activities for children and youth in Canada
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What is this about?

- Participation in a variety of activities, including those done for fun and while not engaged in mandatory tasks, is crucial for a healthy development of children.
- We know that PLAY and PARTICIPATION in several activities is a RIGHT of every children.

However...

- Research shows us that: Children with disabilities participate LESS in leisure activities when compared to their same age peers.

The activities in which they engage are often more passive and home-based.

There are several barriers to participate in leisure including:
- Financial constraints
- Lack of information and the way to participate in programs and activities

Children’s preferences
Family organization and orientation towards leisure
Leisure is not always a priority in rehabilitation interventions
Families and health care providers often don’t know what exists "out there" that could help their child to participate in activities of their CHOOSING

International documents
- UNICEF
- WHO
- UN

We searched these key words: Disability, disabled, children, youth, handicap, participation, leisure and recreation

National policies
- Senate special hearings
- Federal programs
- Tax support
- Legislation

Provincial policies
- Ministries: Family and children, education, leisure, sports, health, social services, well-being
- Disability offices
- Other departments

Talking to health care providers, researchers, and youth with disabilities we learned that:

- Leisure is not always a priority in rehabilitation interventions
- Families and health care providers often don’t know what exists "out there" that could help their child to participate in activities of their CHOOSING

A few take-home messages...

- There are several policies at different jurisdiction levels that support participation in leisure for children with disabilities, however they rarely consider individual needs and research-based information.
- There are several policies supporting participation in sports, but not many policies promoting participation in other areas of leisure.
- Tax credit and other financial supports dedicated to families of children with disabilities may help families to engage.
- Adapted transportation and enforcement of universal accessibility codes may support participation in the community at large.

Our policy mapping showed...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leisure</th>
<th>Sports</th>
<th>Accessibility</th>
<th>Funding</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy on sports for person with a disability (2006-2012)</td>
<td>Goal: Eliminate barriers and make recommendations to support the right of participating in sports and leisure</td>
<td>Goal: Facilitate participation on sports and prepare Paralympic athletes</td>
<td>Goal: Support community-based projects that improve accessibility</td>
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<td>Policy at the provincial level include:</td>
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<td>Social development for disability partnerships program (2009)</td>
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<td>- General disability guidelines</td>
<td>- Few leisure specific policies</td>
<td>- Goal: Support community-based initiatives tackling barriers related to social inclusion</td>
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<td>- Suggestions and support for a Client and family-centered approach to disability benefits and services</td>
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Some disability policies that contain leisure-specific components

- A part entière: Pour un véritable exercice du droit à l’égalité (QC, 2009): Funding support for adapted leisure programs; Reports requested from municipalities with 15,000 + population; Ontarians with disabilities act (ON, 2001); Accessibility of buildings and programs; Adapted transportation; Legislative reinforcement; Disability inclusion framework (SK, 2007); Strategies to be adopted and considerations to community and other service providers to include individuals with disabilities in activities; Access, Inclusion, Equality (NL, 2001); Strategies for wellness promotion through participation in leisure; The disability inclusion policy framework (SK, 2007); Family-centered decisions, Family decides where and how to spend disability allocation.

Goal: Eliminate barriers and make recommendations to support the right of participating in sports and leisure; Goal: Facilitate participation on sports and prepare Paralympic athletes; Goal: To promote physical literacy through community and elite sport programs; Goal: Support community-based initiatives tackling barriers related to social inclusion.

Level the playing field: a natural progression from playground to sport for Canadians with disabilities (2012)

Children’s art and fitness tax credit (2007)

Goal: Support participation of children in paid leisure activities (double benefit amount for children with disabilities)

Canadians sport for life: No accidental champions

Goal: To provide access to information for persons with disabilities and their families

Children’s art and fitness tax credit (2007)

You can find a list of all policies per province here:


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