



CALL TO ACTION

An Emerging National Priority: Health/Fitness Promotion
for People with Disabilities and Activity Limitations



The most recent United States Census estimates there are around 56 million people with disabilities. Despite growing evidence that persons with higher levels of physical fitness have a reduced risk of various chronic conditions and are more physically independent in later life, people with disabilities continue to engage in higher rates of sedentary behavior, have significantly lower levels of physical fitness, and have a thinner margin of health compared to the general population. This increases the likelihood that, as they age, they will have greater difficulty maintaining their ability to work, participating in recreational activities, and performing self-care. As a result, they are also more likely to experience lowered self-esteem and to perceive themselves as having a reduced quality of life. Beyond these impacts on the individual, there is an impact on society through higher health care costs and a greater strain on the national health care budget.

The benefits of at least moderate levels of physical activity are even more important for people with disabilities, as issues of environmental access and reduced employment opportunities combine to produce a far greater likelihood of living a sedentary lifestyle. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that 56 percent of people with disabilities reported no leisure-time physical activity, and only 23 percent are physically active for at least 30 minutes a day three or more times per week.

There is compelling evidence that physical activity helps people with disabilities lead more independent and productive lives while reducing their risk of developing a variety of potentially serious secondary conditions.

KEY ISSUES

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

People with disabilities are much less likely than those without disabilities to engage in regular physical activity.

CHRONIC CONDITIONS

People with disabilities are at a higher risk for common chronic conditions such as diabetes, obesity, and heart disease as well as disability-related secondary conditions.

INCLUSION

People with disabilities are more likely to experience attitudinal, social and programmatic barriers that may limit their inclusion in physical activity, fitness, sports, recreation and physical education.

HEALTH PROMOTION

Healthy behaviors are just as important for promoting health and wellness and preventing disease in people with disabilities as they are for those without a disability. Yet, people with disabilities have been left out of many health promotion efforts.

ACCESSIBILITY

Many fitness and recreation facilities, outdoor spaces, and some types of fitness equipment are not accessible to people with disabilities making efforts to participate in physical activity very difficult.

MISSION OF THE INCLUSIVE FITNESS COALITION (IFC)

The mission of the IFC is to facilitate coordination of organizations and individuals to address the complexity of personal, social, cultural, political, and economic factors that influence – positively or negatively – the participation of people with disabilities in physical activity, fitness, sports, and recreation. The IFC is charged with promoting equitable access to, and safe use of, fitness and recreational equipment, facilities, and programs, to help reduce debilitating secondary conditions associated with disability and a sedentary lifestyle.

THE IFC WILL FULFILL ITS MISSION BY ACHIEVING THE FOLLOWING GOALS:

- ü Increasing inclusion, accessibility, receptiveness, and responsiveness in all areas of physical activity, fitness, exercise, sports, recreation, and physical education for people with disabilities
- ü Developing and advocating for governmental, institutional, organizational and other policy measures and changes that will support the Coalition objectives
- ü Enhancing professional and career development through education and training for individuals dedicated to the areas of physical activity, fitness, exercise, sports, recreation, and physical education for people with disabilities
- ü Enhancing health care provider relationships for people with disabilities through education and training of providers in areas of physical activity and disability
- ü Recognizing exceptional work currently being done by organizations already dedicated to similar causes to IFC
- ü Encouraging support in research and programs in all areas of physical activity, fitness, exercise, sports, recreation, and physical education
- ü Helping combine existing human, informational, and financial resources to create unique success and achievements in the field of physical activity and disabilities
- ü Supporting research and development in exercise and recreational technologies
- ü Supporting the U.S. Surgeon General's First Call to Action on the Health and Wellness of People with Disabilities and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans

Contact Us



The Inclusive Fitness Coalition is an expanded group of organizations representing a cross-section of the disability rights, sports, health/fitness and civil rights communities. To learn more about the Coalition and join visit www.incfit.org or send an email to incfit@lakeshore.org.