



Revised  
Approved 7/27/11 Board Meeting  
NWSRA Board of Trustees

## **NWSRA/MEMBER PARK DISTRICT GUIDELINES FOR INCLUSIVE SERVICES**

NWSRA and its member park districts believe that all individuals should be provided with leisure opportunities that allow for performance at their highest level of ability. Although many people achieve this through participation in an NWSRA program, others may have greater success in a park district activity.

### **ESSENTIAL ELIGIBILITY**

An individual with a disability who meets the “essential eligibility” requirements for participation in municipal services, programs or activities is protected by the ADA. Essential eligibility is likely to include:

*CAPACITY:* Has the individual registered for the activity prior to it being closed because it was at capacity?

*CHARGES:* Will the individual pay the usual fees for the program?

*CONDUCT:* Will the individual follow reasonable rules of conduct?

These are the minimum criteria for receipt of most services. There are four additional factors which may modify essential eligibility: *RESIDENCY, RELATIVE SKILL, SAFETY* and *AGE*. It is important that modifications to essential eligibility apply to all potential registrants, and not be used to screen out people with disabilities.

### **PRINCIPLES OF INCLUSION**

NWSRA and its member park districts adhere to the following basic principles when providing accommodations to allow for successful inclusion of individuals with disabilities in park district activities:

- The interests and needs of the individual participant will be addressed.
- The concern of the parents(s) will be taken into account.
- The member park district and staff will be given full support by the special recreation association.
- Options will be made available to individuals with disabilities.
- The NWSRA board will determine, as necessary, the provisions of resources for inclusion services.

## **INCLUSION PROCESS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN PARK DISTRICT PROGRAMS**

### **REGISTRATION**

When an individual registers for a park district program and indicates that special accommodation is needed, the park district’s registration procedures should be followed.

The park district submits an inclusion request form to NWSRA.

### **ASSESSMENT OF INCLUSION ACCOMODATION NEEDED**

If the participant is registering for the first time, the park district will contact the family to discuss necessary accommodations and explain the relationship with NWSRA.

NWSRA will conduct an observation and if an accommodation is needed for the individual to successfully participate in the program, NWSRA, the park district and the participant/parent will communicate regarding the necessary accommodation and options available.

A meeting between the participant and/or parent, the park district and NWSRA may be desired to further discuss the accommodation needs of the individual and the program goals.

Each situation will be assessed individually to determine the amount of technical and/or staff support necessary for the individual to function within the guidelines of the program. Decisions will be made jointly by the park district and NWSRA, with input from the parent/participant.

### **OPTIONS FOR INCLUSION SERVICES**

If the individual can function in the program **without assistance**, NWSRA may:

- Observe the first week only, to ensure successful inclusion.
- Observe as needed, giving tips to staff on adaptations and other related information.

If the individual can function in the program with **minimal assistance**, NWSRA may:

- Provide in-program training of park district staff.
- Provide more formal in-service training of park district staff, on the specific disability, behavior management, empathy training or other appropriate topics.
- Provide the park district with adapted equipment and/or resources for purchasing adapted equipment.

If the individual can function in the program, only with more involved assistance of **inclusion aide** NWSRA may:

- Do all of the above, plus provide the park district with a trained volunteer or part time staff to assist in the program.

### **DEFINITION OF INCLUSION AIDE:**

An inclusion aide could be a volunteer or part time staff provided to a park district program. The inclusion aide's role is to assist the park district program so the program can successfully include and meet the needs of the participant with a disability.

The following criteria should be used to determine the need for the placement of an inclusion aide:

- Ability level of participant
- Behavior issues
- Mobility needs of the participant
- Safety related concerns
- Communication needs/abilities of participant
- Instructor/participant ratio

When an inclusion aide is needed, NWSRA will coordinate the aide search and provide whatever training is needed. Park District staff are encouraged to recommend any qualified candidates they may be aware of.

### **TIMEFRAMES FOR PROVIDING INCLUSION AIDES**

When an individual with a disability comes to a program without notification of any necessary accommodation, the park district will notify NWSRA within 24 hours if assistance is required. NWSRA will provide a staff member to observe and assess the situation within 3 working days for a program that meets daily, or by the next class meeting if the program meets weekly. The park district should contact NWSRA as soon as they learn about the disability and before taking further action. The individual should be accommodated to the best of the park district's ability until NWSRA can assist.

When the park district notifies NWSRA that a participant needing special accommodation has registered, and the park district and NWSRA agree that an inclusion aide is needed, the following time frame will apply:

- Permanent inclusion aide for the program by the first class meeting if ample notice (2 weeks) was given.
- NWSRA staff member to assess the situation as soon as possible if no advance notice was given, with permanent inclusion aide to be assigned as soon as possible if needed.

### **POLICY FOR PROVISION OF INCLUSION AIDES BY NWSRA MEMBER PARK DISTRICTS**

NWSRA works with its member park districts to provide inclusion services to park district program participants who require such services. The goal of NWSRA and its member park districts in providing inclusion services is to ensure that all individuals requiring such services receive them, and that those individuals are enabled to participate in leisure opportunities at their highest level of ability.

NWSRA shall generally be the employer of the inclusion aides. As the employer, NWSRA maximizes efficient and effective training and scheduling of the inclusion aides among the member park districts, and consolidates the administrative work associated with the aides' employment. NWSRA controls the employment of the inclusion aides through its responsibility for their hire, training, assignment supervision, evaluation and scheduling. The member park districts' share in control over the working conditions of the inclusion aides through orientation of the aides with regard to the member park districts' policies, procedures and site-specific expectations, and control over the work site where the aides are assigned.

Through its assessment of the inclusion needs and assignment of appropriate aides to member park district participants, NWSRA ensures that the inclusion services are aligned with an acceptable use of the special recreation levy to cover expenses under the joint agreement with the member park districts.

## **RECRUITMENT & HIRING OF INCLUSION AIDES**

Advertising for inclusion aides to assist in inclusive situation should be included in both NWSRA and park district seasonal brochures, flyers, and other appropriate media.

NWSRA can coordinate the inclusion aide search and hiring.

In some cases, for long-term programs such as preschool, extended day care or day camps, it may be desirable to have the park district put the inclusion aide on its payroll, and then invoice NWSRA for the amount paid. This scenario may allow for the best inclusion of the aide into the team of staff working the program. For other, short-term programs, NWSRA can retain the aide on its payroll. The NWSRA staff and park district staff need to communicate at the onset of hiring regarding all paperwork to be completed.

## **TRAINING OF INCLUSION AIDES**

NWSRA will provide specialized training relating to disabling conditions, adapting activities, behavior management, etc. to the inclusion aide, as well as to the entire staff of a given program as needed. NWSRA will provide ongoing training for park district staff members, upon request, at orientations, staff meetings, and other times organized by the park district.

NWSRA refers the inclusion aide to the park district to be oriented and trained along with the other staff. For long term assignments, the park district should make sure the inclusion aide receives training on park district policies and procedures.

The inclusion aide provided should attend any meetings that the park district and NWSRA staff agree would be beneficial to the participant's involvement in the program. This could include staff planning meetings and possible school district or related services meetings with an NWSRA full time staff present.

## **SUPERVISION OF INCLUSION AIDES**

It is suggested that the inclusion aide provided not be referred to as the "NWSRA aide", but be referred to by the same title as other staff in similar roles within the program. The aide should work within and communicate along the park district chain of command. The aide should also communicate any concern with their NWSRA supervisor, who will then talk with the park district liaison regarding the concerns.

The park district site supervisor/head instructor for the program has the authority to supervise and discipline the inclusion aide, along with all others in the program. NWSRA will check in on the program periodically and with the aide, but the most direct lines of oversight should be between the program supervisor and all staff members within the program. The NWSRA Inclusion Coordinator should be informed of any specific personnel issues that occur.

## **INCLUSION AIDE ABSENCES**

When an inclusion aide is absent (with last minute notice), discussion should take place between the park district and NWSRA regarding needs. First, the park district coordinator/supervisor should determine if the staff in the program can handle the situation for the day. If the park district staff cannot, then the park district and NWSRA should jointly work to find a replacement. Options for finding a replacement include:

- Rearranging inclusion aides within the park district if there are multiple sites and/or multiple inclusion aides.
- With consideration that the individual needing inclusion assistance is a registered member of the park district program, a philosophy exists that in cases of long term, daily programs (i.e. after care, day camp, etc.) the park district staff at the program should be aware of the needs of the individual included and know how to effectively include that child. In these cases, the best option may be for the park district to provide a sub to the program, and for one of the existing park district staff at the program to serve as the inclusion aide for the day.
- NWSRA provides a sub from its existing inclusion aides who do not have an assignment at the time the sub is needed. This may be considered specifically in programs that the park district staff do not have as frequent of contact with the participants and therefore not as aware of the individual's needs (i.e. a weekly swim lesson or dance program that is a limited number of weeks).

The NWSRA inclusion coordinators will make it a practice not to move aides who have an assignment in one park district to sub for a last minute need in a different member park district. However, it is recognized that there are cases involving personal care issues or participants with extreme behavioral issues that may require the rearranging of staff from one park district to another.

### **ONGOING COMMUNICATION**

Communication of information will primarily take place between the park district Coordinator/Supervisor and the NWSRA Manager of Inclusion Services or the Inclusion Coordinators. Superintendents will be informed of, and involved in, situations as deemed necessary.

Park district staff as well as the inclusion aide should have ongoing communication with parents regarding the day to day happenings of the program (since it is the park district's program). NWSRA full time staff will have phone contact or a site visit with the park district staff at periodic intervals to monitor the inclusion. NWSRA will provide the park district staff with resources such as evaluation forms and observation forms to enhance communication with all parties involved.

Park district and NWSRA staff should be in regular communication as to the progress and success of the inclusion. At such time as the supervisors involved believe that an inclusion aide is not needed; an attempt should be made to institute a trial period without the extra support. If the situation worsens during the trial period, the inclusion aide should be reinstated.

The NWSRA Board of Trustees will have the responsibility to make overall decisions related to the level of continued support over the long term and the financial responsibilities attached.

### **REMOVAL OF PARTICIPANT FROM PROGRAM**

If a participant poses a significant risk to the health and safety of others (a "direct threat") in a program, four factors must be weighed:

- The nature of the risk
- The duration of the risk
- The severity of the risk, and
- The probability that a potential injury will actually occur.

If the participant is deemed a direct threat, he/she may not be removed until a reasonable accommodation has been provided.

The following steps should be taken **before** removal from the program:

- Inform participant as to the parameters and limits for the individual to remain in the program.
- Set meeting with parents, NWSRA inclusion staff, the program staff and park district liaison to discuss options for the participants and develop and intermediary plan.
- Implement intermediary steps discussed including safety measures, staffing changes or an individualized behavior plan and contract if necessary.
- Continue to communicate with all involved parties.
- Determine if additional measures or assistance can be provided once again before suggesting removal from program.
- Document all meetings, incidents, complaints, safety concerns and problems as well as successes throughout the process.

If removal of the individual becomes necessary, it is vital to communicate as gently and diplomatically as possible. Suggestions for other options such as NWSRA programs may be appropriate. It is also important to leave the door open for future participation of the individual in a park district program. If an individual is not able to function within the guidelines and structure of the program with the assistance of an inclusion aide, and all intermediary steps have been implemented, including informing the Executive Directors of NWSRA and the park district, park district staff may notify the parent and remove the individual per the park district procedures.

The following two grievance procedures shall be available to the consumer:

Level 1 – A review with the parent/legal guardian, a park district representative, the site staff, the inclusion aide, and NWSRA inclusion staff or representative.

Level 2 – A review with the parent/legal guardian, the park district director or representative, the school representative, and the NWSRA director or representative.

### **AUTHORITY**

The ultimate authority rests with the program provider whether that is the park district or the park district and school district if a joint program. Any discussions that need to take place between park, school, and NWSRA representatives should be handled in a confidential manner. NWSRA encourages the park and/or school representative to provide for the grievance process and to strongly consider our recommendations. However, NWSRA fully appreciates the authority that rests with the park districts and/or school districts in terms of being the ultimate service provider.