

Participation 101

Accessibility

Participating in an activity in a new environment can be both exciting and challenging. Advanced planning and preparation, including information about accessibility, may result in a more successful participation experience. A suggestion to consider is to call, send an email, and/or visit a facility in advance of the activity and briefly explain what your child needs in his or her environment in order to have the best and most accessible experience. Knowing this information will help you to plan ahead for participation. Here are some questions to consider:

Building structure

- Are there adequate accessibility features?
- Is there room to move around?

Supports

- Does my child need a support person in attendance and will the facility and/or program accommodate this request?
- Is the instructor able to provide one-on-one support?
- Are peers understanding and patient?

Rules of the institution/organization

- Are there different rules and regulations regarding the required minimum attendance or age limit?

Financial considerations

- Is the admission for a support person free, or reduced?

Equipment adaptations

- Does my child require alternate equipment and is this available at the facility, or a part of the program?
- Does my child require equipment adapted to accommodate for mobility challenges?

Rules and structure of activities

- Should the length of the activity be shortened and will the program accommodate this request?

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Physical demands of the activity

- Does my child require more frequent breaks and can this modification be built in to the program or activity?

Sensory demands of the activity

- Will my child be able to cope with these demands, such as noise, lighting, temperature, textures of objects?

Some general questions to ask a program coordinator or instructor about accessibility:

- Is there a time that my child and I could visit to see if this program/activity is a good fit?
- Can my child arrive before other people to enable more time to put on equipment, get seated, set up for activity, etcetera?
- Can the price of admission be decreased due to financial constraints?
- Can a support person be admitted for free or at a reduced cost due to a need for one-on-one support?
- When is the least busy time to attend this program/activity?
- Can instructors give instructions that are adapted to the needs of my child (e.g. use of pictures, one-step directions, choices between two objects)?
- Are the parking lot, building entrance, washrooms, and rooms accessible? (e.g., ramps, wide doorways, enough space for turning and maneuvering around inside, separate accessible washroom)
- Is there wheelchair accessible seating? Is the wheelchair accessible seating clearly marked?
- If wheelchair accessible seating is not available, can accommodations be made to make seating available?
- Where is the accessible seating located in relation to the activity, and/or the instructor/presenter?
- Is there seating available for a support person to sit next to my child?

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Notes about the program/activity and additional questions that I would like to ask:

A Resource from *CanChild's* Participation Knowledge Hub:
<https://www.canchild.ca/en/research-in-practice/participation-knowledge-hub>