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*Evaluating the Needs of Families Raising Children With and Without Disabilities: Focus on Physical Activity*

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*Background:* More than 10% of children in Ontario have an additional need that may influence long-term lifestyle patterns, including physical activity (PA). It is necessary to understand how disabilities affect PA for young people; however, little is known about the influence on families. This study sought to assess the status of PA as well as the barriers to and facilitators of PA for families in southwestern Ontario raising disabled and non-disabled children.

*Methods:* Complete survey data were collected for 128 families for this study. Data were analyzed using a series of statistical tests such as Mann-Whitney U tests, chi square tests for independence, and descriptive analysis.

*Findings:* Compared to families raising typically-developing children, families raising disabled children reported reduced enjoyment from PA, were more likely to report programs as too expensive, were more likely to report their PA needs were not met in the region, and placed more importance on inclusive PA. Further, families raising disabled children were less likely to report benefits of PA, including physical fitness, sense of identity, and self-esteem, and were more likely to report negatives associated with PA, including lack of self-esteem, social anxiety, feeling inadequate, and concerns with body image. Despite these differences, there were no differences between amount of PA between the two groups. Open ended responses from the caregivers raising disabled children provided insight as to the need of families in accessing services and therapies throughout the region.

*Conclusions:* These results point to the importance of developing inclusive and affordable programming in the region to enhance PA enjoyment for all participants, particularly those with disabilities. Community, institutional, and policy level action are warranted to make these changes.