

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 affects PA for young people; however, little is known about the influence on families

PURPOSE

- 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

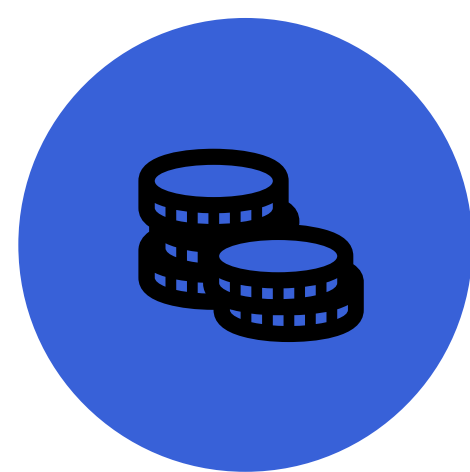
METHODS

- survey data were collected for 128 families
- data were analyzed using a series of statistical tests including Mann-Whitney U tests, chi square tests for independence, and descriptive analysis

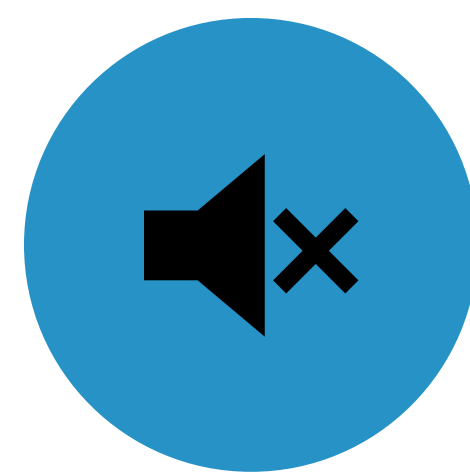
RESULTS

- compared to families raising typically-developing children, families raising disabled children reported reduced enjoyment from PA, and placed more importance on inclusive PA
- families raising disabled children were less likely to report benefits of PA, and were more likely to report negatives associated with PA (Table 1)
- there were *no differences between amount of PA* reported by parents in both 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
- needs included increased accessibility to services, shortened waitlists, flexibility in how funding is spent, and increased respite care

Figure 1: Compared to families raising typically developing children, families of disabled children were...



MORE LIKELY TO REPORT PROGRAMS AS TOO EXPENSIVE



MORE LIKELY TO REPORT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY (PA) NEEDS GOING UNMET



MORE LIKELY TO REPORT NEGATIVE PA EXPERIENCES



LESS LIKELY TO REPORT POSITIVE PA EXPERIENCES



MORE LIKELY TO RATE INCLUSIVE PA AS IMPORTANT

“[we need] more respite care. Massive wait list and it takes years to get [respite care].” – Parent

“[we need] more flexibility - right now we get different envelopes of funding and are restricted to what each can be spent on when we're really like more of one and less of another... Flexibility in time services are available. Doesn't help much when they're primarily available [Monday to Friday] 9[am]-5[pm]” – Parent

“Resources in this region are very limited and waiting lists are too long.” – Parent

DEPENDENT VARIABLE	DISABILITY (N=27)	NO DISABILITY (N=101)
Positive Experiences		
Became physically fit	12 (44.4%)*	71 (70.3%)*
Built a sense of identity	11 (40.7%)*	68 (67.3%)*
Developed self-esteem	13 (48.1%)*	78 (77.2%)*
Negative Experiences		
Has been bullied	8 (29.6%)**	13 (12.9%)**
Lack of self-esteem	12 (44.4%)*	23 (22.8%)*
Social anxiety	11 (40.7%)*	16 (15.8%)*
Concerns with body image	7 (25.9%)*	7 (6.9%)*
Felt inadequate	10 (37.0%)*	15 (14.9%)*
Lack of support from peers	4 (14.8%)**	4 (4.0%)**

Table 1: Chi square test of homogeneity on positive and negative experiences in PA
* p<.05, ** p<.055, ***p<.075

CONCLUSIONS

- results point to the importance of developing inclusive and affordable programming in the region to enhance PA enjoyment for all participants, particularly young people with disabilities
- community, institutional, and policy level action are warranted to make these changes