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## Occupational Therapy and Accessibility in the Outdoors and Summer Camps

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# Occupational Therapy and Accessibility in the Outdoors and Summer Camps

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## BACKGROUND

Multiple studies indicate the positive, sustained impacts that outdoor recreation and summer camps have on youth and adolescents of all abilities (American Camp Association, 2005; Devine et al., 2015; Halsall et al., 2016; Hanscom, 2014; Snider & Farmer, 2017). These experiences promote physical, social, emotional, and spiritual development that has further generalizable benefits in many areas of occupational performance and participation (Buskirk-Cohen, 2015; Clark & Nwokah, 2011; Hanscom, 2014). Largely influential components of these experiences are environment and context. Occupational therapy foundations allow for further understanding of how environment and context can either facilitate or hinder occupational performance and participation in the outdoors and camps. Applying these foundations and an OT perspective supports the development of inclusion and accessibility practices in these settings to best facilitate occupational performance for individuals of all abilities.

## PROBLEM

There remains a need in understanding and developing occupational therapy roles regarding inclusion and accessibility in outdoor recreation and camp programs.

## PURPOSE

**To develop the potential roles of occupational therapy in addressing inclusion and accessibility in outdoor recreation and camp programs.**

## PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- Develop an understanding of the current roles OT has in outdoor settings and camp programs
- Review current inclusion and accessibility organizations and trainings designed for outdoor recreation and camp staff
- Develop an understanding and synthesis of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines, universal design principles, and accessibility standards for outdoor recreation, camps and facilities, and how these are put in practice
- Review, understand, synthesize, and promote the process for programs to apply for inclusion and accessibility fundraising and grant opportunities
- Develop an understanding of outdoor recreation and camp programs and facilities, as well as perceptions, experiences, and input regarding inclusion, accessibility, and areas of need
- Develop an understanding of outdoor activity adaptations and gear available for outdoor recreation and camp programs
- Synthesize research, resources and collaboration with contacts to create a website utilizing an OT scope for addressing inclusion and accessibility in outdoor recreation and camp programs
- Review and discuss strategies, recommendations, and/or plans for implementing the resources and information from the website to address needs and potential adaptations that benefit outdoor recreation and camp programs
- Advocate for and communicate the role of OT in optimizing inclusion and accessibility to better promote occupational participation and performance in outdoor recreation and camp programs

## METHODS

### Literature Review

- Positive Youth Development and Camp Experiences
  - Quality of Life and Social Participation
  - Identity, Independence, and Leadership
- Camp Experiences for Children with Disabilities
- Inclusion in Camps and Outdoor Recreation
- Physical Environment and Occupational Performance
- Camps and Occupational Therapy

### Collaborations

- Elizabeth "Otter" Hueter-Willoughby, Program Director at Pathfinder Ranch
- Angela Hanscom, OTR/L, creator of TimberNook and author of *Balanced and Barefoot: How Unrestricted Outdoor Play Makes for Strong, Confident, and Capable Children*
- Aron Hall, Director of Education and Training at National Inclusion Project
- Michelle Cook, Accessibility Program Manager at National Center on Accessibility
- Anonymous OTR/L, working in an outdoors and nature-based outpatient pediatric setting

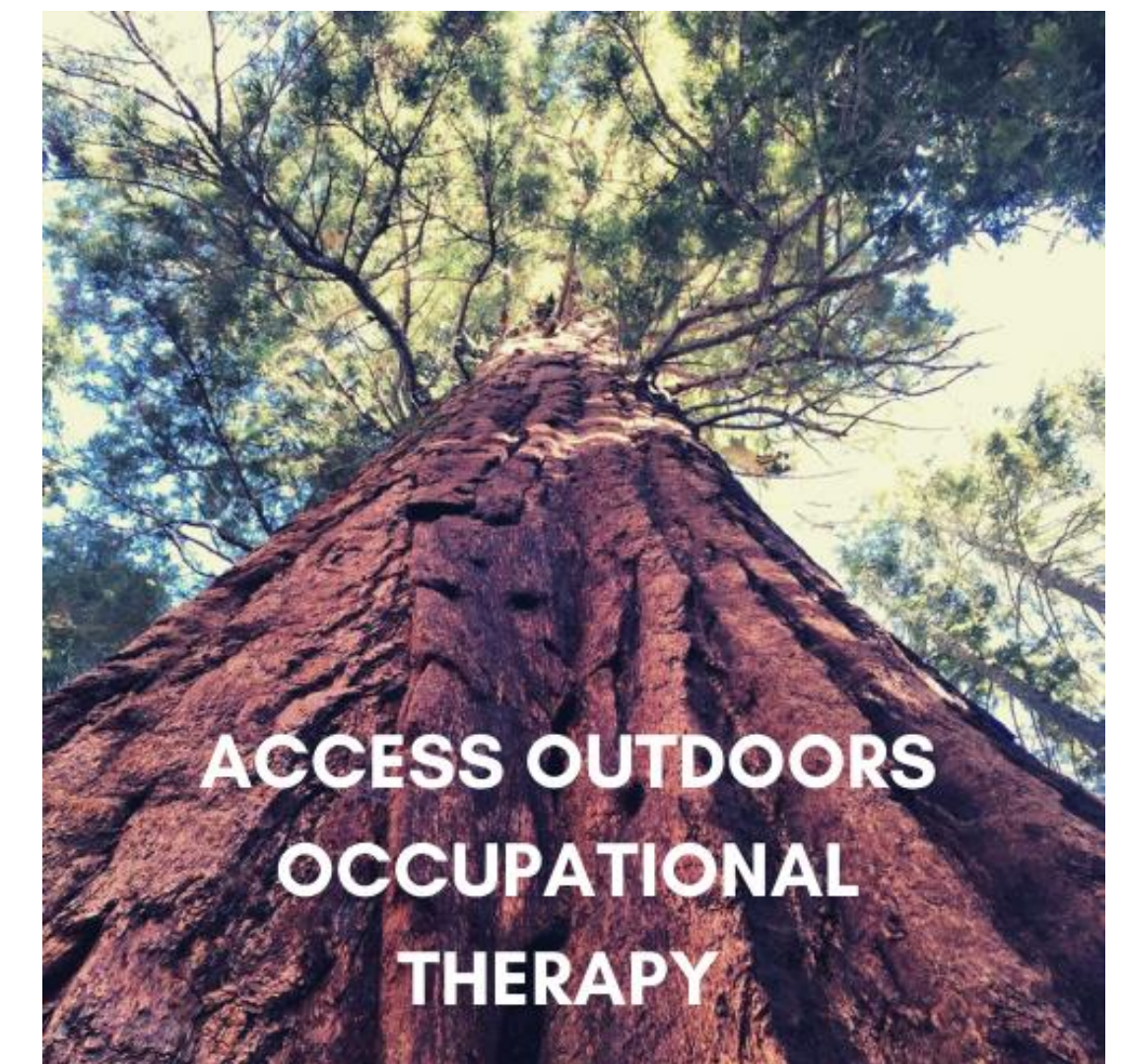
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## WEBSITE DESCRIPTION

### [Access Outdoors Occupational Therapy](#)

- Cumulative product of research, review, collaboration, and synthesis of available information and resources pertaining to project objectives.
- Target audience: Outdoor recreation and camp program staff, therapists interested in working outdoors and in nature, those wanting to learn more about inclusive and accessibility practices in the outdoors and camps



### OT Impact

- Applications of OT Foundations
  - EHP, PEOP, MOHO
- Childhood & Adolescent Development
- Expanding roles in outdoors & camps

### Envisioned Next Steps

- Community partnerships
- Staff education
- Facility and program evaluations
- Consulting and recommendations
- Grant writing and fundraising