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OT's Role in Community Accessibility at Public Parks and Playgrounds for Parents with Disabilities

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OT's Role in Community Accessibility at Public Parks and Playgrounds for Parents with Disabilities



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for HEALTH SCIENCES

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Doctor of Occupational Therapy Program

BACKGROUND

- Public parks and playgrounds serve as vital hubs for parent-child play, social inclusion, and community participation.
- These recreational areas often remain inaccessible for individuals with disabilities (Lynch et al., 2020).
- Inclusive playgrounds are often not designed for adults with disabilities, creating barriers to engagement for parents with disabilities and their children (Dalpra, 2022; Jacob et al., 2019).

PROBLEM

There is a lack of social inclusion and opportunities for parents with disabilities to actively engage in play occupations with their children at public parks and playgrounds.

PURPOSE

The capstone project included three components:

- Development of an administration manual and how-to videos for the Modified PARCs assessment
- Advocacy, highlighting the self-reported accessibility needs of parents with disabilities
- Educational programming for parents with disabilities on strategies for identifying park accessibility features to support inclusive play.

DEVELOPMENT

- Person Environment Occupation Person Model
- Parenting Occupations and Purposes Framework
- Community Partnership
 - Through the Looking Glass
 - Adaptive Parent Project
- Needs Assessment
 - Literature Review
 - Playground and Community Accessibility Challenges for Disabled Parents
 - Environmental Assessments
 - Occupational Therapy's Role in Supporting Parents with Disabilities
 - Semi-Structured Interviews
 - Microsoft Teams/RingCentral/ZOOM
 - Phone

IMPLEMENTATION

❖ The Implementation Phase
My capstone involved utilizing the Modified Parks for Activity and Recreation in our Communities (mPARCS) tool to effectively assess the usability park features and determine which are the most common inaccessible park features within the San Diego county.

MOST COMMON INACCESSIBLE PARK FEATURES: SAN DIEGO COUNTY PARKS

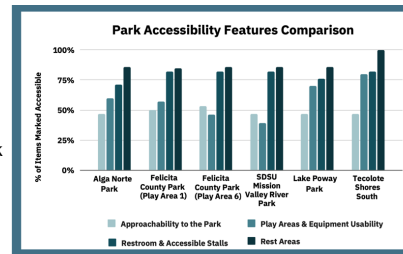
- Restroom and Accessible Stalls: Automatic Doors
- Rest Areas: Arm Rest
- Approachability to the Park: Bus Stop
- Play Areas and Equipment Usability:
 - Fenced Play Areas
 - Stable Surfaces (i.e. sand, tan park)

❖ Parks Assessed
Neighborhood Parks

- Alga Norte Park
- Felicita County Park
 - Play Area 1
 - Play Area 6
- SDSU Mission Valley River Park

All-Inclusive

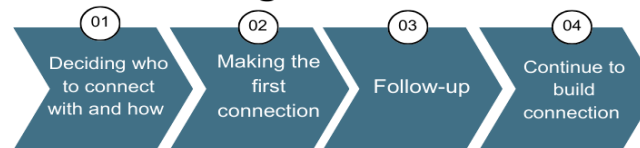
- Lake Poway Park
- Tecolote Shores South



❖ Other: Articles, Podcasts, Webinars

ADVOCACY

Making Connections



Example: Connecting with the San Diego City Council's Parks and Recreation



STAKEHOLDERS

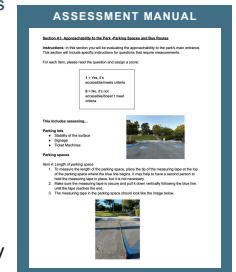
- Disability Advocates
- Founders of Organizations
- Occupational Therapists
- Planners and Developers
- Parents with Disabilities

Objectives:

- Advocating for Parents with Disabilities
- Advocating for the Role of Occupational Therapy

DELIVERABLES

- Through the Looking Glass
 - Assessment Manual
 - "How to" Videos
 - Both will be utilized as guidance for the mPARCS tool
- Adaptive Parent Project
 - Alternative Play Methods Kit
 - Presentation: Parenting with a Disability and Park Accessibility



IMPLICATIONS & NEXT STEPS

- OTs have a significant role in ensuring environmental accessibility in home settings but tend to be less involved in designing public spaces.
- OT's knowledge of inclusion, development, and skills in advocacy and education would add an important perspective to an outdoor space interprofessional design team (Young et al., 2019).
- Collaboration between park planners and people with disabilities could improve accessibility and usability, (Perry et al., 2021).
- Potential for raising public awareness for parents with disabilities extending beyond local engagements and existing organizations.

REFERENCES

This project does not involve human subjects and does not require IRB approval.



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