

**WORLD LEISURE INTERNATIONAL POSITION STATEMENT
ON
LEISURE EDUCATION AND POPULATIONS OF SPECIAL NEEDS**

Drafted and approved at

**The WLRA/ELRA International Seminar
on
Leisure Education and Populations of Special Needs
Jerusalem, ISRAEL September 1998**

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NOTE:

WLRA's Seminar on Leisure Education and Populations of Special Needs which was held on Jerusalem in September 1998, was convened primarily in response to growing expectations around the world regarding the benefits of leisure. This Position Statement is based on the WLRA International Charter for Leisure Education which was drafted in Jerusalem and ratified by WLRA in 1993. The Seminar was sponsored also by ELRA - The European Leisure and Recreation Association. The Seminar was organized by the WLRA Commission on Education, The European Leisure and Recreation Association (ELRA), The Israel Leisure and Recreation Association, (ELRA Israel), The Cosell Center for Physical education, Leisure and Health Promotion of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, The Zippori Center for Community Education in Jerusalem and The Variety Center for the Child and the Family in Jerusalem.

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1. PREAMBLE

- 1.1 People with special needs* must have the legal, moral, ethical and economic public policy support to lead self-determined and authentic active living life plans within diverse cultural frameworks. Leisure education, for the most part, should center on facilitating these life plans by the attainment of optimal and meaningful leisure experiences. Therefore, all services, programs and institutions addressing the needs of people with special needs should be planned, implemented and evaluated in terms of the following belief systems and recommendations:
- 1.2 A fundamental belief should support the idea that all people, regardless of their condition in life, should have the right to develop their human capacities to an optimal degree. This deeply imbedded concept is no less valid for persons with disabilities. Increased evidence indicates that disabled persons can benefit from participation in recreational activities during their leisure. The universality of need for leisure and its positive use demands such opportunities to be made available to all. Through leisure experiences, individuals are enabled to live more satisfying, enjoyable and productive lives than when such opportunities are not accessible.
- 1.3 A community's vision should be inclusive of all its individuals, embodying a clear value of commitment to enhance access to leisure opportunities of individuals with special needs. Therefore, it should be recognized that leisure education programs for people with special needs play important roles in improving the quality of community life.
- 1.4 Two forms of leisure are referred to from time to time in this work are defined as "serious or substantial leisure" - a systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist or volunteer activity that

participants find so substantial and interesting that, in the typical case, they launch themselves on a career centered on acquiring and expressing its special skills, knowledge and experience; and "casual leisure" or "diversionary leisure" - the immediately intrinsically rewarding, relatively short-lived pleasurable activity requiring little or no special training to enjoy it.

- 1.5 Pursuant to the WLRA International Charter for Leisure Education, the following recommendations are being proposed:

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Governments, institutions and community frameworks should:

2. General

- 2.1 Recognize, develop and promote the principle that quality of life should be fundamental for all.
- 2.2 Recognize, develop and promote the right for all individuals to participate in leisure activities regardless of their ability or disability or age.
- 2.3 Identify special populations and their particular leisure needs.
- 2.4 Recognize the existence of stigmas and their effects on people with discredited social identities in leisure.
- 2.5 Understand the negative effects of prejudice, discrimination, stigmatization, marginalization and individual oppression, especially in labeling people and distancing them from community leisure.
- 2.6 Advocate that respect and dignity are the foundations of all public programs, services and institutions.
- 2.7 Accept that society is comprised of many diverse groups with different leisure needs and desires.
- 2.8 Develop equal leisure access for people with special needs through such structures as transportation, housing, work and other life necessities and community services.

3. Education

- 3.1 Integrate people with special needs within the educational mainstream and the community
- 3.2 Employ educational approaches (such as guided discovery and reinforcement) to foster the development of positive attitudes towards the benefits and use of serious leisure.
- 3.3 Teach people with special needs the basic serious leisure skills so that they may pursue an optimal use of leisure.
- 3.4 Establish opportunities for the socialization and enhancement of self-esteem of people with special needs and thereby reducing societal prejudices and increasing co-experience through leisure education.
- 3.5 Educate essential personnel (e.g. caregivers, social service professionals, family members and support groups) to undertake educating people with special needs about the benefits of leisure.

4. Community

- 4.1 Explore leisure themes and their contributions to enhancing the meaning of community to people with special needs.
- 4.2 Empower leisure opportunities through the process of self-determination, self-enhancement and self-actualization.
- 4.3 Educate society that healthy communities are comprised of many diverse groups with different leisure needs.

- 4.4 Provide adequate leisure facilities and physical space for special populations to help them realize leisure benefits and facilitate their mobility.
- 4.5 Utilize modern information technology to allow easy local and international access to leisure resources. This implies a supply of telephones, computers, networks, community and international communication capabilities and other facilities that would prevent the isolation of people with special needs.
- 4.6 Create special leisure interacting events within the community for raising awareness and acceptance through experimental learning atmospheres in supportive environments.
- 4.7 Encourage collaboration with and the interest of various agencies within the community in the delivery of leisure services to the disabled.
- 4.8 Advocate for and invest in subsidies to support and demonstrate the importance of facilitating leisure for people with special needs.
- 4.9 Advocate for and invest in ongoing theoretical and applied research for the development of better technology and equipment to enable the improvement of leisure opportunities of people with special needs.
- 4.10 Discuss, develop and implement a community vision that is inclusive of all its members.
- 4.11 Work to create a heightened sense of community in establishing ongoing leisure programs that meet the complex long-term needs of special populations including:
- a shared sense of membership
 - acknowledgment of mutual importance
 - an affirmation of common beliefs and shared values
 - a coming together to bind or network
 - an acceptance of mutual responsibility for the well-being of the community
- 4.12 Develop an enhanced capacity for community mobilization to assist the community in moving toward positive action, including:
- developing sustained leadership
 - formalizing procedures and ground rules
 - providing rewards and incentives for community efforts
 - creating internal and external communication avenues
 - having members with community organizational know-how
 - establishing effective behind-the-scenes support
- 4.13 Build readiness for focused community action by:
- establishing clear goals and objectives
 - creating a feasible plan of action
 - using collective capabilities and resources
 - providing for the active participation for those with special needs
 - taking immediate action to change conditions
 - fostering high-performance team functioning
- 4.14 Create opportunities with affiliated neighborhood, community and professional groups to champion the benefits of leisure education and recreational pursuits while enhancing the quality of lives of those with special needs.

5. Children With Special Needs

- 5.1 Leisure education programs for disabled and other special needs children play an important role in improving the quality of life of these children. Appropriate government ministries, public institutions and organizations should take the necessary steps to enhance the quality of life of children with special needs by increasing their level of interaction with other children in a way that will better their prospects for becoming self-supporting, accepted and involved members of society.

- 5.2 Therefore, these agencies should develop and implement a program of effective leisure education, for disabled and other special needs children and youth. This program should:
- 5.2.1 Develop an index of leisure activities to engage these children's attention and energy.
 - 5.2.2 Propose ways to ensure that appropriate steps will be taken to enable these children to fully and safely participate in the activities proposed.
 - 5.2.3 Establish the necessary infrastructure (e.g. personnel, facilities, equipment and access by ability level) by working with local authorities so that recreational facilities will be accessible from children's homes.
 - 5.2.4 Recommend appropriate modifications to ensure that the physical design of facilities will accommodate the disabled.
 - 5.2.5 Promote public and other means of transportation to ease accessibility and independent movement.
 - 5.2.6 Organize promotional campaigns to publicize relevant activities programs, events and leisure skills training that will benefit disabled children.
 - 5.2.7 Assure continued community support through designing leisure programs so that all such activities can be enjoyed by disabled and non-disabled children alike.
 - 5.2.8 Conduct an overall assessment of how particular groups of children spend their free time.
 - 5.2.9 Develop a simple measurement scale to determine what leisure-related skills children are currently capable of doing.
 - 5.2.10 Determine what types of equipment and other adaptations are needed to make various leisure activities accessible to these children, giving their specific limitations.
 - 5.2.11 Prepare activity plans for children with different types of disabilities.
 - 5.2.12 Assess the kinds of sports and leisure activities that will enhance socialization between children with and without disabilities.
 - 5.2.13 Promote the training of personnel to provide the necessary supervision for the activity plans prepared.
 - 5.2.14 Identify factors in the children's home environments that affect the prospects for their benefiting from specific or general sports and leisure activities.
 - 5.2.15 Assess characteristics of the children's home (parents' ages, the presence of siblings, etc.) cultural and neighborhood environments that may be conducive to activating specific types of leisure activities.
 - 5.2.16 Promote the introduction into schools and community centers of models for developing sensory abilities, motor coordination and basic sports skills through integrated body movement and sensory stimulation, as forms of leisure support activities.
 - 5.2.17 Develop these children's abilities to interact with their peers, through individual and group sports and games activities using special assistive equipment.
 - 5.2.18 Promote models for serious leisure skills development through a system of multi-dimensional leisure activities, such as music, drama, art, crafts, sport, nature-oriented activities, special events, computers and other lifelong leisure activities.

6. Leisure Counseling For Special Populations

- 6.1 Leisure counseling** shall be incorporated into the overall leisure education program offered by leisure services providers at facilities serving the leisure needs of people with special needs of all ages.
 - 6.2 Institutions that discharge clients into the community, such as correctional facilities, substance abuse programs, hospitals and rehabilitation settings shall require the completion of a leisure counseling program/course before discharge.
 - 6.3 Governments, public institutions and organizations should provide:
 - a) leisure counseling services in pre-schools, schools and camps to both teachers and people of special needs of all ages
 - b) training for teachers in leisure counseling techniques to enable implementation of leisure counseling services to people of special needs of all ages
 - c) training to community centers and other leisure agencies personnel in leisure counseling techniques to enable implementation of leisure counseling services to people of special needs of all ages.
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- * The term People with Special "Needs" includes people of all ages, who have developmental disabilities and impairment of adaptive behavior of various levels; physical disabilities including chronic health-related conditions, congenital malformations, muscular-skeletal and nervous system disorders, hearing and visual impairments, emotional disabilities, eating disorders, social disabilities (including delinquent or unacceptable social behavior)

- ** Leisure counseling is a helping process designed to facilitate optimal leisure well-being for all. It can be a helpful intervention in work with a variety of special need populations, such as the physically disabled, developmentally disabled, juvenile delinquents, substance abusers and elders.