

# Inclusive Summer Camps for the Pediatric Population:

*Fostering Belonging for  
Children with Disabilities*

# Contents

1. About us
2. Introduction
3. Benefits of inclusive camps
4. Barriers to social inclusion
5. Inclusive program design considerations
6. Themes of inclusive practice
7. Fostering a sense of belonging
8. Framework for inclusive program design
9. Let's put it into practice



About Us



# About Us



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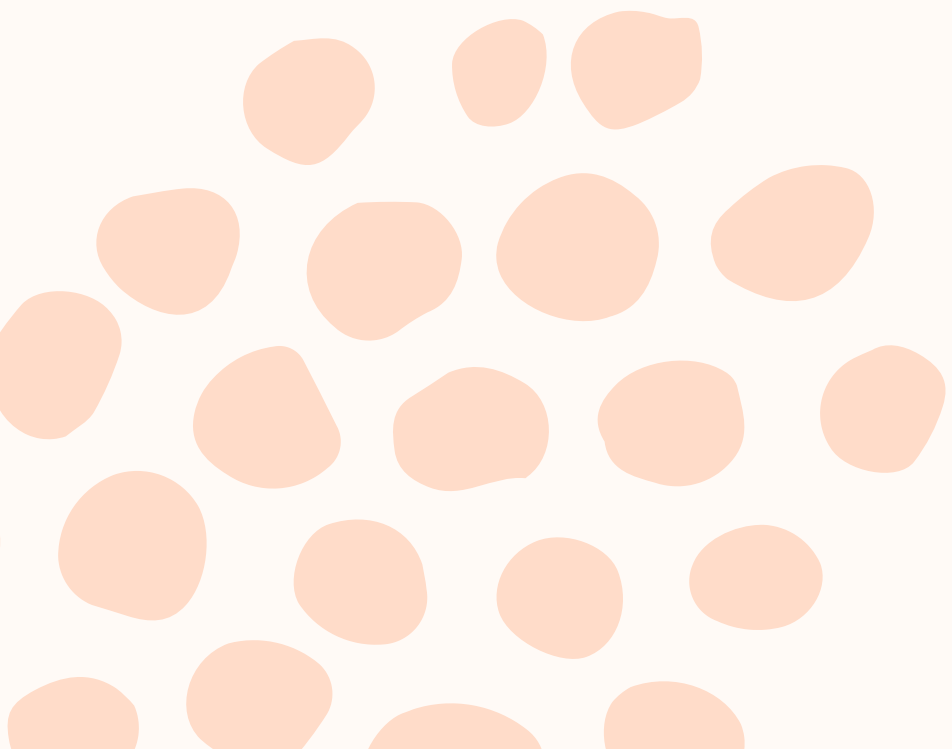


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# Introduction





# Objective

After participating in this session, attendees will be able to:

- Design a camp program to provide meaningful recreational and social opportunities for children with diverse needs
- 

# Benefits of Inclusive Camps



# Benefits of Inclusive Camps

MULTITUDE OF BENEFITS

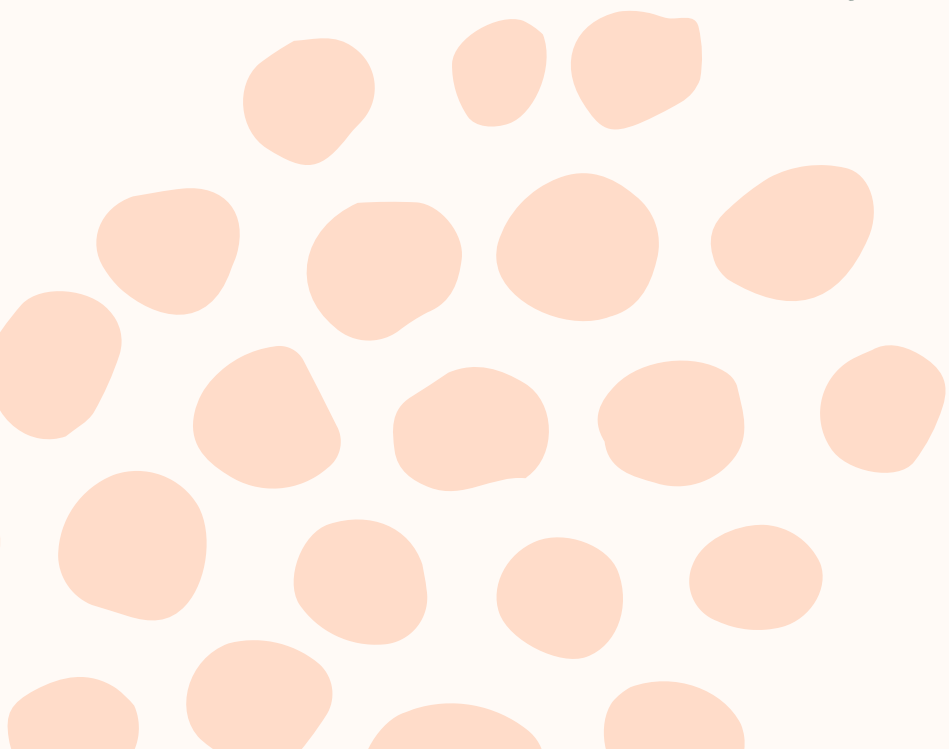
ADDRESS IMPORTANT AREAS  
OF DEVELOPMENT

- Positive identity
- Positive values
- Social skill & competency
- Self- esteem
- Physical skills

(Buskirk-Cohen, 2015; Halsall et al., 2016; Snider & Farmer, 2017, as cited in Lewis, 2020)



Barriers of  
Inclusive Camps





Environmental &  
Architectural  
Obstacles



Lack of Awareness,  
Training &  
Accommodations



Provider &  
Family Costs



# Defining the Issues

- INCREASED SOCIAL EXCLUSION & LOW SOCIAL INTEGRATION
- LOWER LEVELS OF SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING
- INCREASED RISK OF LONELINESS, ISOLATION & BULLYING
- HIGH LEVELS OF RESTRICTED SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY-BASED PARTICIPATION

(Cummins & Lau, 2003; Frazee, 2003; Harvey, 2001; Koster et al., 2010; Lindsay & McPherson, 2012; Snowden, 2012 as cited in Koller et al., 2018; Evans and Plumridge 2007; Frazee 2003; Guralnick, 2010; Guralnick et al., 2007; Guralnick & Groom 1988; Koster et al. 2010; Lindsay and McPherson 2012; Locke et al. 2010; Marini et al. 2001; Mitchell and Sloper 2001; Nadeau and Tessier 2006; Pople et al., 2015; Runswick-Cole 2011; Vreeman and Carroll, 2007, as cited in Koller & Stoddart, 2021)

# Physical Barriers: Environmental & Architectural Obstacles

## LOCATION & SITE CHOICE:

- What sites in the communities provide access or adhere to ADA regulations

## FACILITY ACCESS: INDOOR & OUTDOOR

## RESTROOM ACCESS

## MOBILITY

(Bedini, Bialeschki, & Henderson, 1992)



# Physical Barriers:

- CREATIVE SOLUTIONS AND CAREFUL PLANNING TO ADDRESS PHYSICAL BARRIERS

What can improve access with small modifications?

(Bedini, Bialeschki, & Henderson, 1992)





# Attitudinal Barriers

HOW ARE NEGATIVE ATTITUDES PERPETUATED? AND  
HOW ARE NEGATIVE ATTITUDES OVERCOME?

- Exposure
- Education

KEY PLAYERS:

- Staff and personnel
- Parents and families
- Potential campers
- Peers
- Donors
- Education

(Bedini, Bialeschki, & Henderson, 1992)






# Economic Barriers

## Cost from the Provider Side:

Costs of developing a camp from the ground up

- Site usage fee & necessary site adaptations
- Staff
- Liability insurance
- Marketing and outreach
- Equipment and supplies.

## Cost from the Participant Side:

- Camp registration
  - Transportation
  - Impact on caregiver employment
  - Other support persons
    - Support staff, nurse,
  - Lunches, snacks, misc. items
- 

# Barriers of Omission

WHAT ELEMENTS THAT ARE NOT PRESENT  
ACTUALLY HINDER ACCESSIBILITY AND  
INCLUSION?

When there is a lack of....

- Camp promotion
- Inclusive and respectful attitudes
- Intentional programming
- Role models
- Choice (e.g. activity, food, level of participation)
- Communication modalities
- Staff training & knowledge

(Bedini, Bialeschki, & Henderson, 1992)



IS INCLUSION  
ALWAYS THE ANSWER?



# Social Inclusion

REFERS TO THE "PROCESS OF IMPROVING THE TERMS OF PARTICIPATION IN SOCIETY, PARTICULARLY FOR THOSE WHO ARE DISADVANTAGED" (UNITED NATIONS, 2016)

Common themes in stakeholders' perspectives and experience of social inclusion include:

- Sense of belonging
- Choice & control
- Having valued roles & meaningful engagement
- Societal responsibilities
- Social connection to the community

"An interpersonal process allowing people with limitations or differences to feel acknowledged and valued" (Meininger, 2010 as cited in Merrells et al., 2018).

(Hammel et al., 2008 as cited in Koller, 2018; Crane, 2002; Lemay, 2006; Wolfensberger, 1998 as cited in Merrells et al., 2018)

# Specialized Design vs. Inclusive Design

## Specialized Design

- Programs specifically tailored to the needs of children with disabilities
- Unique supports and barrier-free environment

## Inclusive Design

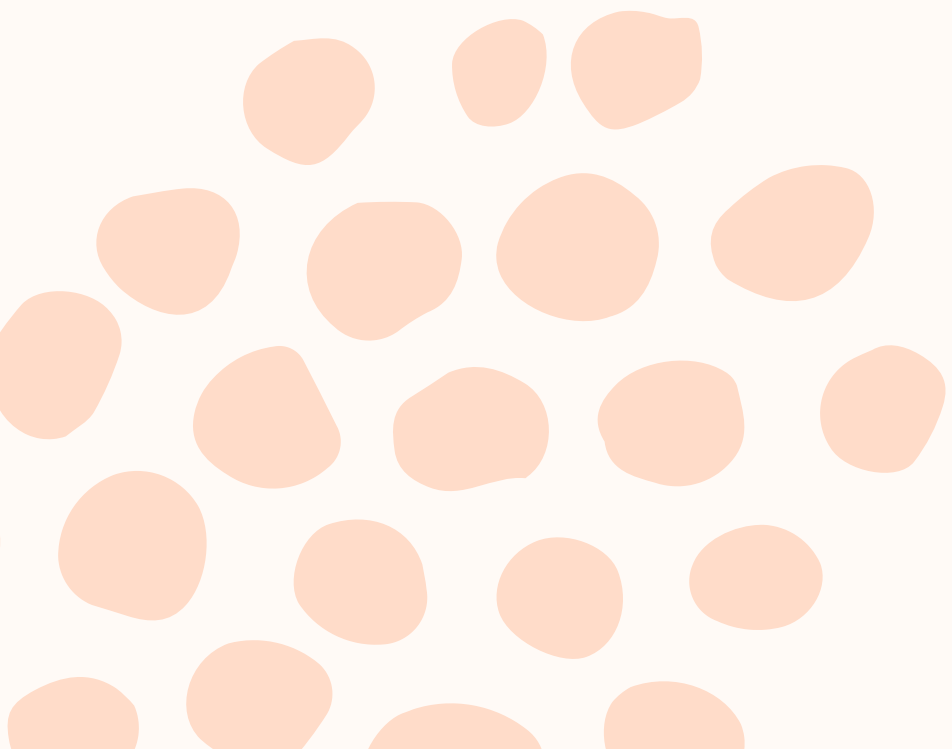
- Programs for youth with and without disabilities, regardless of ability
- Promoting maximum participation in least-restrictive environments

How do we avoid programs that are "spatially proximal but socially distant"?

Intentional programming is needed "to promote awareness, a sense of community and belonging, and equal participation"

(D'Eloia & Price, 2018)

# Inclusive Program Design Considerations



1. Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
2. Fostering a sense of belonging
3. Themes of inclusive practice





# Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

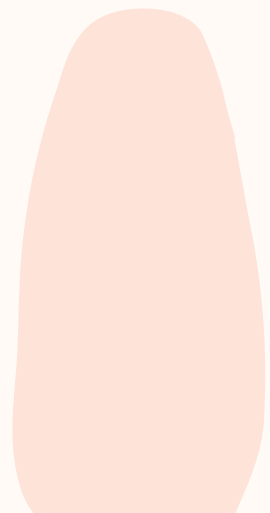
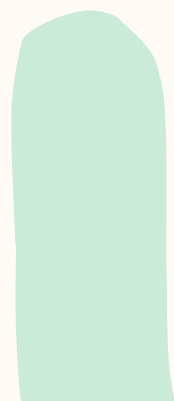
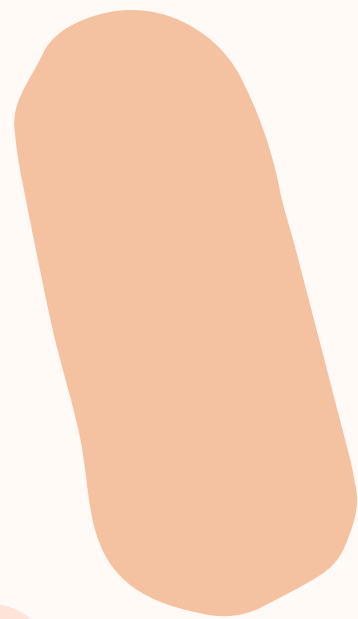
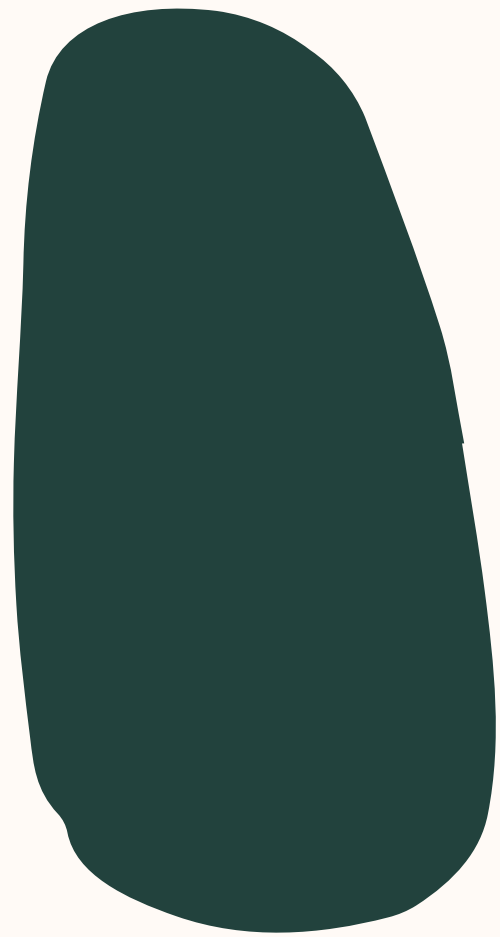
"A research-based framework for designing curriculum...that enables all individuals to gain knowledge, skills and enthusiasm for learning" (Higher Education Opportunity Act, 2008 as cited in AOTA, 2015).

UDL principles are not only well aligned with the principles of OT but with identified themes of inclusive camp practices





Fostering a Sense of  
Belonging





# *A Sense of Belonging*

- SOMETHING THAT IS EXPERIENCED.
- BOTH OUTCOME AND COMPONENT OF INCLUSION
- INTENDED AS A PRIMARY GOAL OF CAMP PARTICIPATION FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

(D'ELOIA & PRICE, 2018)





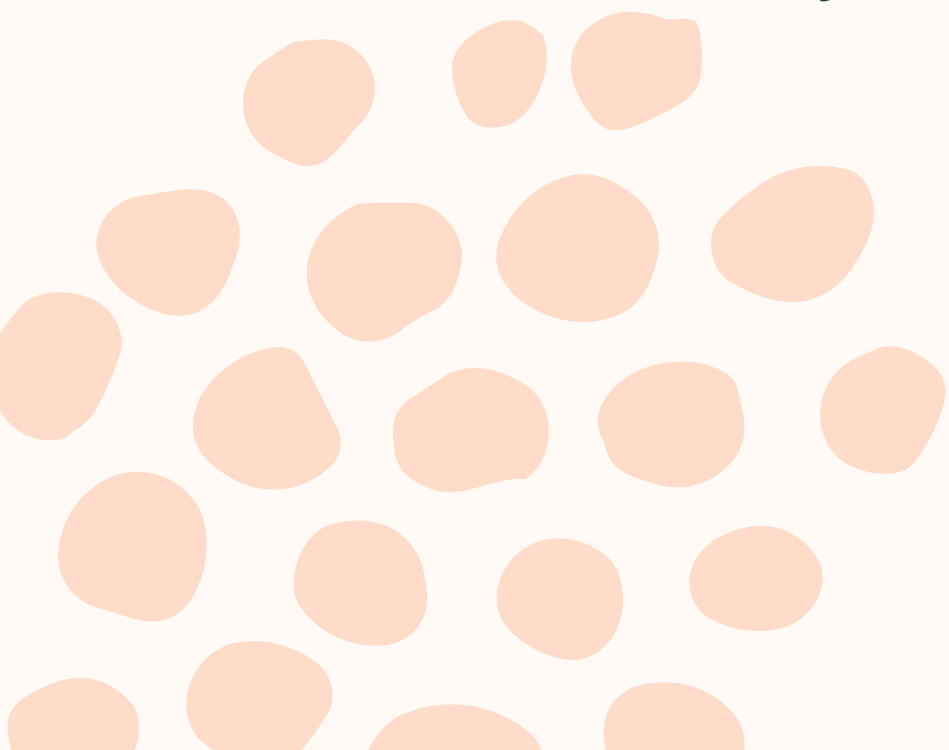


# A Sense of Belonging

INFLUENCED BY:

- Choice
  - Social Connectedness
  - Participation
  - Social Responsibility
- 

Themes of  
Inclusive Practice



# Participation

(Dattilo et al., 2019)

## PROVIDER ACTION: ADAPT & ACCOMMODATE

- Design proactively, not reactively
- Plan for the highest level of need
- Multiple meaningful ways of engagement

## PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES: ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE

- Self-defined participation

# Social Connections

(Dattilo et al., 2019)

## PROVIDER ACTION: FOSTER CONNECTION

- Offer shared activities, create groups and teams
- Create collaborative spaces
- Promote spontaneous interactions

## PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES: DEVELOP RELATIONS

- Belong to a group
- Relationships within and outside of camp



# Choice

(Dattilo et al., 2019)

## PROVIDER ACTION: INSPIRE AUTONOMY

- Allow for, and encourage self-defined participation
- Offer flexible expectations and routines

## PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES: MAKE CHOICES

- Which activities, with whom, how long, and in what way
- 

# Enjoyment

(Dattilo et al., 2019)

PROVIDER ACTION: CREATE OPTIONS      PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES: HAVE FUN

- Utilize cooperative activities & preferred interests
- Support exploration, breaks, & relaxation
- Plan for those with higher support needs
- Learn from the experts

- Positive emotions, experiences & memories
- Increased engagement

# Competence

(Dattilo et al., 2019)

## PROVIDER ACTION: INSTILL COMPETENCE

- Reframe "success"
- Provide scaffolding & feedback that encourages effort & perseverance
- Offer opportunities to try new things
- Avoid comparison

## PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES: FEEL CONFIDENT

- Have confidence in their skills
- Develop resilience
- Take a risk at something novel
- "I CAN DO THIS"

# Social Responsibility

(Dattilo et al., 2019)

## PROVIDER ACTION: PROMOTE SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOR

- Provide education
- Promote perspective-taking
- Increase awareness
- Model & recognize inclusive actions

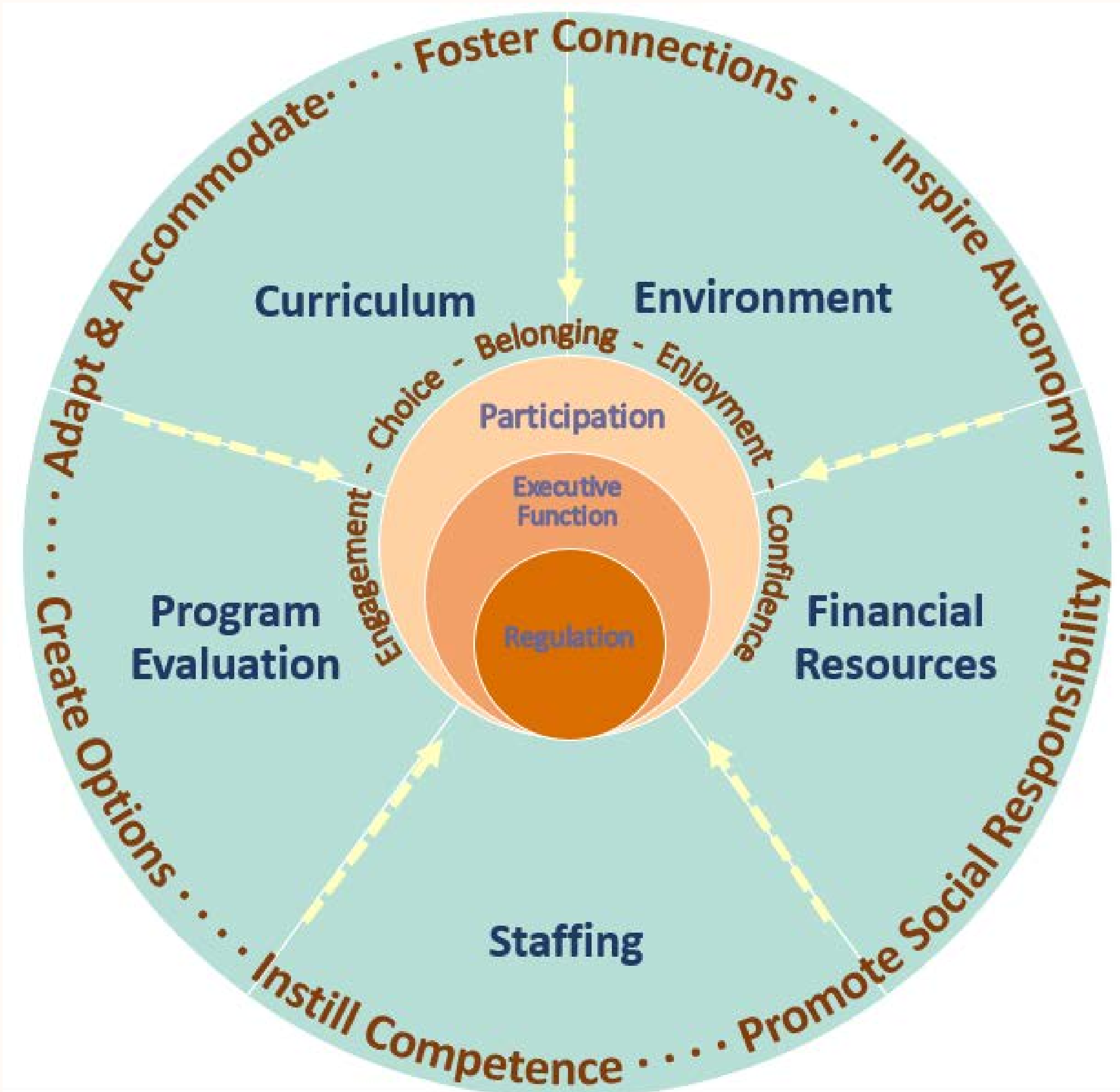
## PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES: BE ACCEPTING & RESPECTFUL

- Be helpful
- Be kind
- Inspire others to connect
- Be a peer model





Framework for  
Inclusive Program  
Design

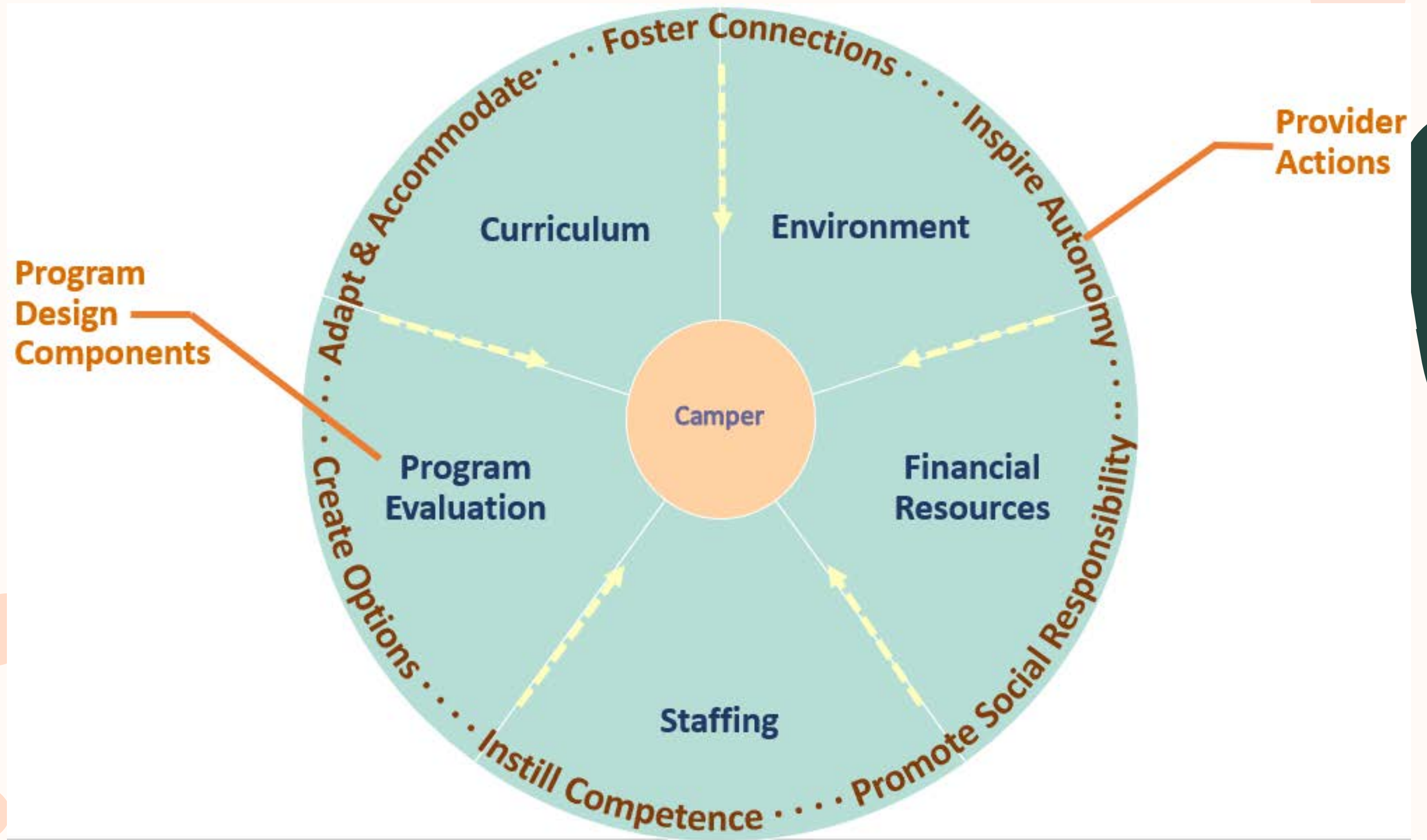




*The Child*

Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social engagement</li> <li>• Competence</li> </ul>
Executive Function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choice</li> <li>• Motivation</li> </ul>
Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arousal</li> <li>• Emotional regulation</li> </ul>

# Provider Roles in Planning



# Curriculum

WHY, WHAT, HOW, WHERE, WHEN

- WHY - Participation & Enjoyment
  - The foundation of program planning
  - Needs to build upon campers' sensory and emotional regulation for optimal engagement
- WHAT - What activities help achieve the desired outcome
  - What are the means of engagement?
- WHEN - Duration that best facilitates children's participation
  - Camp day, activity components, etc.

- WHO - Being Supported & Providing Support
  - Target population
  - Planning, Leading & Supporting

- HOW

- How to support campers' sensory, social, emotional & physical needs within activities?
- How to balance the needs of the individual as well as the group?
- How to support freedom & choice?
- How does budget influence your curriculum?

# Where - Environmental Considerations

Camp as a safe space, distinct from therapy, to explore & express oneself

- Safe
- Accessible - ADA Compliant & Beyond

## Areas

- "Command Center" & Operational Spaces
- Eating & Seating
- Outdoor/Indoor
- Cooling Areas
- Parking & Event Access

## Considerations

- Temperature
- Electrical Access
- Flexibility & Contingency Options
- Emergency & Safety Procedures
- External Sensory Stimuli




# Staffing

- Group Design
  - Who comprises your staff?
  - Staff to camper ratios
  - What are the roles & levels of responsibility?
    - Consider employees vs. volunteers
- Where to Find Potential Staff
  - Professional and personal recommendations
  - Job fairs
  - Local universities & colleges
  - Local schools & clinics





# Staffing

- Considerations When Finding Camp Staff
    - Motivation & incentive
    - Availability
    - Timelines for hiring, onboarding & training processes
- 

# Staff Training

## Curriculum-Based Training

- Values & mission of the camp
- Principles of inclusion
- Create a welcoming & accepting space
- Support self-defined participation
- How to transition between activities
- Anticipate & manage challenging behaviors

# Staff Training

## Operational Training

- Procedures (safety, emergency, daily)
- Communication systems
- Schedules
- Environment
- Daily/Weekly team meetings

# Staff Training

## Parent Perspectives & Mediating Parental Anxiety

- Build confidence in staff capabilities
- Support active communication
- Separation from parent
- Procedures for staff screening, training & supervision
- Increase familiarity & reduce novelty

# Financial Resources

## Develop Program Budget

- Expenses: Facility, salaries, special events, supplies, & misc.
- Estimated Income: Camper registration, potential sponsorships or grants

## Grants vs. Sponsorships

- Grants: Offered by foundations looking for programs that align with & fulfil their mission
- Sponsors (or Donors): Looking to fund events with a return-on-investment

## Finding Prospective Sponsors & Grantors

- Lead time
- Eligible applicants
- Types of grants
- Relationships are key!



# Financial Resources

## Stakeholders

- Current & past camp families & staff
- Vendors, sponsors & other business partners
- Governmental & regulatory agencies
- Potential stakeholders

## Community Partners

- Potential aids to development
- Civic groups & agencies
- Special events
- Volunteers

# Program Evaluation

- What are the goals of the program?
- What outcome measures are aligned with your goals?
- Outcome measures should inform planning & design from beginning to end

## Outcome Measures Tools: Surveys

- From parents, campers, staff
- Pre-, during, and post-



(American Camp Association, 2023)

Let's Put it Into  
Practice!







*Thank  
you*

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