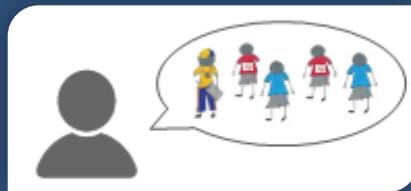
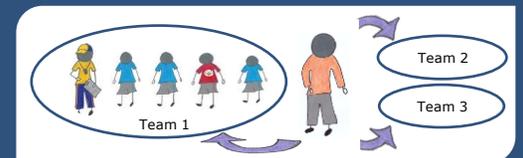


Guide to Implementing Strategies to Foster Inclusion Through Sports



How to optimize the effect of sports and physical activities on social inclusion of people with intellectual disability?



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To cite this document:

Grandisson, M., Martin-Roy, S., Talbot, A., Morin, D., Lamontagne, M.-E., Milot, E., Marcotte, J., Ouellet, B., & Vincent, A. (2021). *Guide to implementing strategies to foster inclusion through sports*. <https://communautesinclusives.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Guideinclusionthroughsports.pdf>

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About the Guide



Introduction

Participation in **physical and sports activities** can have positive outcomes at various levels for a person. Among other things, it helps promote the development of physical skills, self-confidence, autonomy, adoption of healthy life habits and, of course, good health.

Participation in physical and sports activities can also foster **social inclusion** of certain groups who encounter challenges more frequently when participating in activities in their community. This is the case for, among others, people with **intellectual disability**.



What is social inclusion?

Social inclusion comprises 3 aspects:

1. A person's **participation** in activities in his or her community;
2. The development of **positive relationships** with others;
3. The emergence of a **sense of belonging** to a group.

A potential to be optimized

Generally, physical and sports activities are not used to their full potential to foster social inclusion of people with intellectual disability.



The majority of people with intellectual disability participate in sports activities that are **dedicated** to them in specialized contexts. Despite their benefits, these activities are less favorable to the development of relationships with peers without intellectual disability.

A few **unified** initiatives involve a similar number of athletes with and without intellectual disability who train and compete together. They can promote the development of favorable attitudes towards inclusion and help establish positive relationships during the activity. However, these initiatives are rare in Québec.

Some people with intellectual disability participate also in activities intended for the **general population**. Yet, few support measures are in place to promote positive experiences for all the people involved.

Objective of the Guide

The purpose of this guide is to promote the use of physical and sports activities to their full potential to foster social inclusion of people with intellectual disability.

What is in the guide?

The guide presents a wealth of useful information for fostering inclusion of people with intellectual disability in physical and sports activities. It provides details about 7 strategies to foster inclusion through sports that can be used in various settings.

In addition to this *About the Guide* section, it contains 2 main sections:



Strategies to Foster Inclusion Through Sports



Self-Evaluation Tools

The section on **Strategies to Foster Inclusion Through Sports**  concerns:

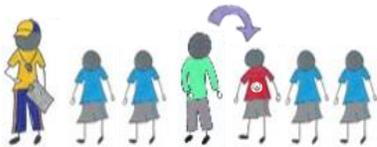
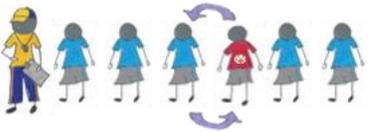
- Descriptions of the 7 strategies to foster inclusion through sports;
- The choice of a sports activity;
- The combination of strategies to optimize the potential for social inclusion.

The 7 strategies are first summarized in the table on the next page.

The section on **Self-Evaluation Tools**  includes 2 tools that will allow you to review your experience in implementing a strategy to foster inclusion through sports.

7 Strategies to Foster Inclusion Through Sports

The strategies to foster inclusion through sports are summarized in the table below and described in the following section (p. 8). They support involvement of athletes who have intellectual disability in activities with athletes without intellectual disability.

Strategy	Description
<p>1. Develop Unified Activities</p> 	<p>Half the athletes have intellectual disability and the other half do not. They train and compete together.</p>
<p>2. Carry out Awareness-Raising Activities</p> 	<p>Activities are carried out to make the population aware of the potential of people with intellectual disability and the benefits of including them in sports.</p>
<p>3. Develop and Offer Training for Coaches</p> 	<p>Training is offered to the coaches to equip them to facilitate inclusion of athletes with intellectual disability in a sports team.</p>
<p>4. Offer Support From an Attendant</p> 	<p>Support is offered to the athlete with intellectual disability from an attendant who is not part of the team. This attendant is present during the team's activities.</p>
<p>5. Offer Support From a Teammate</p> 	<p>The athlete with intellectual disability receives support from a teammate to facilitate the athlete's inclusion within the team.</p>
<p>6. Offer Support From a Resource Person</p> 	<p>A resource person is available as needed to provide support in including the athlete with intellectual disability. The resource person is not always present during team meetings.</p>
<p>7. Encourage Involvement in a Role Other Than of an Athlete</p> 	<p>The person with intellectual disability is part of a sports group, but does not practice the sport. Instead, he or she has other roles (example: assistant coach).</p>

For Whom Is this Guide Designed?

This guide is for all the **people** and **organizations** who want to be involved in **fostering social inclusion** of people with intellectual disability through **physical and sports activities**:

- Specialized sports organizations (example: Special Olympics);
- Regular sports organizations;
- Coaches;
- Volunteers;
- Athletes;
- Community organization workers;
- Health and social services workers;
- School support staff;
- Parents;
- Researchers;
- Cities and municipalities.

Do you want to **know more** about ways to promote a positive experience of inclusion through sports?

Do you want to **include** a person with intellectual disability in a regular sports group?

Do you want to **develop an** innovative **project** for inclusion in physical and sports activities?

This guide is for you!

How to Use the Guide

Reference tool

- The entire guide can be consulted to **help choose** the strategies to foster inclusion through sports.
- You can use specific sections as a **guide to implementing** a strategy.
- Some sections may help you if you encounter **difficulties**.

Source of inspiration

- The information in this guide can be considered as a **starting point** to implement an initiative.
- Its application can be flexible.
- Let yourself be inspired and be creative!

Self-Evaluation

- It is proposed that, after implementing a strategy, you complete the **self-evaluation** of its implementation to learn about your experience and help you enhance it.



Be creative in using the 7 strategies to foster inclusion through sports. Also consider implementing structuring initiatives to promote the development of inclusive communities through physical and sports activities.

You could, for example:

- Involve people with and without intellectual disability from a same community so they can work together in developing an initiative that suits them.
- Develop new proposals for activities that foster inclusion through sports by consulting people with intellectual disability throughout the process.

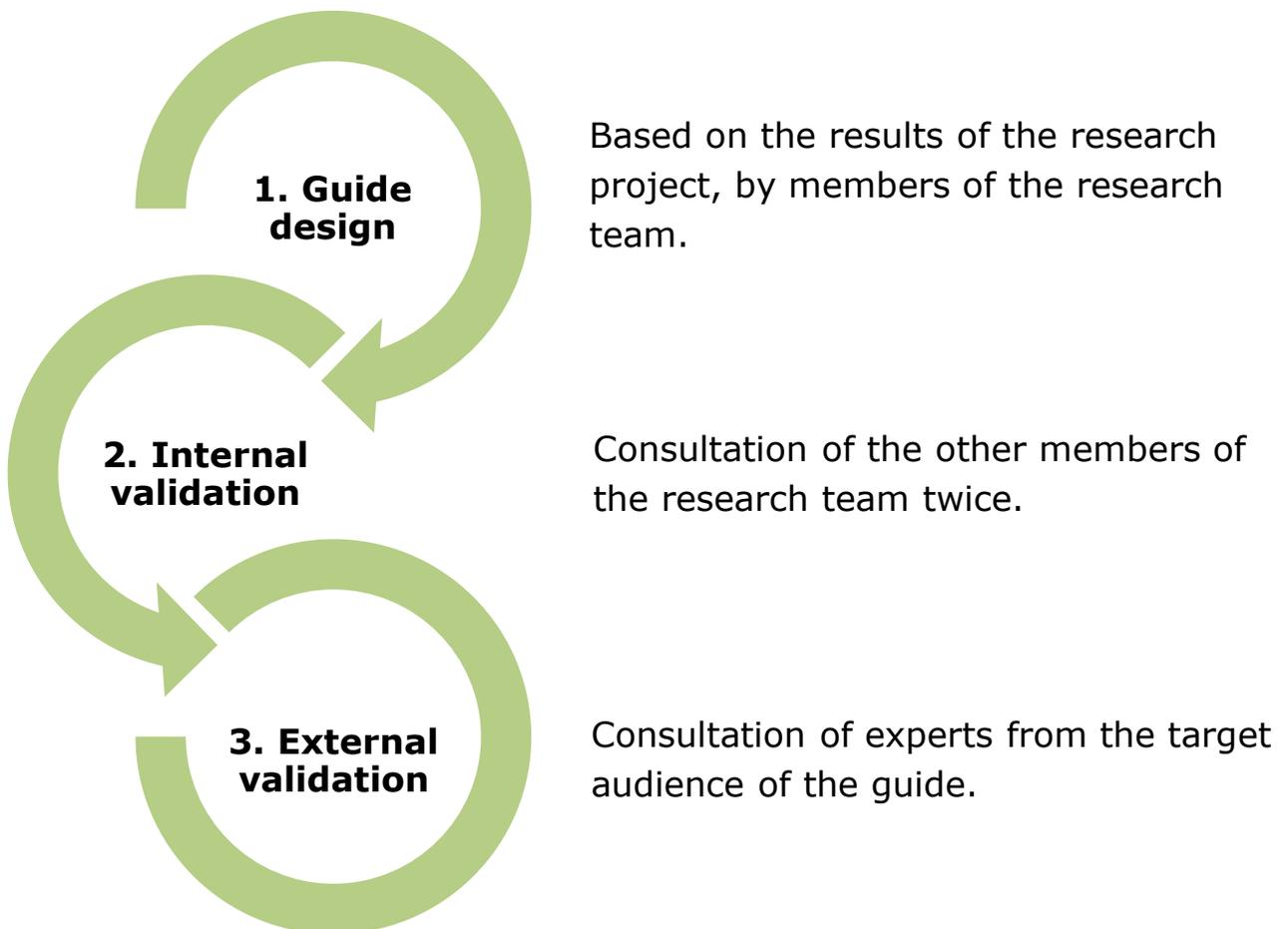
The strategies presented may also **foster inclusion of other groups of people**, for example, athletes with autism spectrum disorder or with visual limitations.

How Was the Guide Developed?

This guide was developed based on results from a research project conducted at Université Laval (2016-2019) pertaining to strategies to foster inclusion of people with intellectual disability through sports.

These strategies were documented using a literature review, discussion groups, as well as an online survey. Additional information on the research project is available in [Appendix 2](#) (pp. 54-55).

Here are the **key steps** that led to the production of this guide:



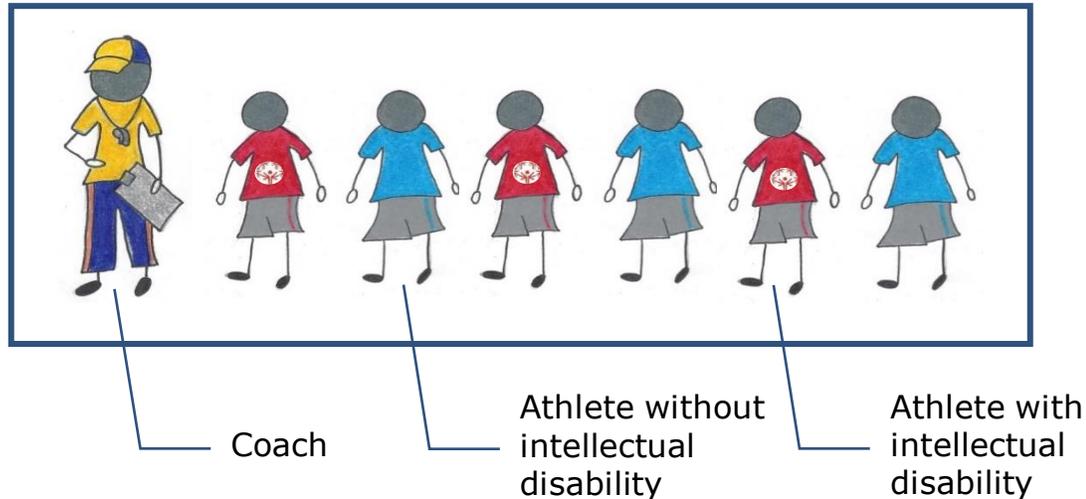
During the internal and external validation, people were consulted to ensure that the information was clear, relevant and sufficient.

The **experts** consulted are actors involved in the inclusion of people with intellectual disability in physical and sports activities. Their names are listed on page i (external validation).

Strategies to Foster Inclusion Through Sports



Strategy 1: Develop Unified Activities



- Forming of **unified** sports groups (**half-and-half**):
 - About half the athletes have intellectual disability and the other half do not;
 - The athletes practice a sport or a physical activity **together**, ideally on a **regular** basis;
 - They can take part in competitions together.

Example: Athletes with and without intellectual disability train together once a week for 10 weeks to ultimately run a first 5 km together.



Did you know that?

Unified activities were created by Special Olympics to **encourage meetings** between athletes with and without intellectual disability. They have been set up in several countries and involve more than 1.4 million enthusiasts around the world (Special Olympics, [Play unified](#)).



Advantages and Disadvantages of Unified Activities

To determine if developing unified activities is a good choice, it is important to know their advantages and disadvantages.

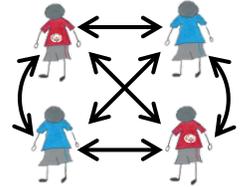
Advantages



Impact on social inclusion

They promote:

- Opportunities for people with and without intellectual disability to interact;
- The development of positive relationships and mutual assistance;
- The development of social skills and self-esteem;
- Positive attitudes.



Disadvantages



Maintaining relationships is difficult

It is difficult to create relationships between athletes that are maintained outside the unified activities, especially if:

- The activities are not regular;
- The athletes with and without intellectual disability are not part of the same community.

Recruitment is difficult

It may be difficult to recruit enough athletes (example: in rural areas or when the athletes have busier schedules).

Time and resources are required

Developing unified activities requires time and resources that are not always available.



Organizing Unified Activities

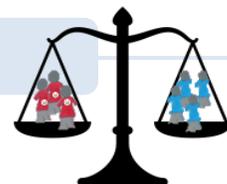
Here are a few recommendations to help organize unified activities and optimize their repercussions for social inclusion.

1. Encourage the pairing of athletes with similar sports skills and interests

So that all the athletes benefit and are motivated to stay involved for several weeks.

2. Pay attention to the composition of the group

Remain flexible as to the number of athletes with intellectual disabilities.



3. Organize the activities preferably on a regular basis

Example: One training session per week for several weeks.

4. Establish a common goal

Example: Participate in an event after 10 weeks of group training.



5. Consider easily accessible recreational contexts

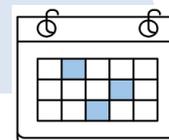
Example: At school or in activities offered by cities and municipalities.

6. Consider individual sports

Example: Favour swimming in a club rather than hockey involving many strategies and requiring quick reactions while respecting the participants' interests.

7. Organize Unified activities at strategic moments

Example: When the regular season is over.



8. Promote a climate of inclusion and mutual assistance

Example: The coach organizes games during which the athletes must support one another to reach a goal.



Inspirational Unified Initiatives



Unified yoga

Inclusive yoga sessions were offered in a Québec City yoga studio:

- The yoga classes were held 4 Saturdays in a row.
- 5 people with intellectual disability and 5 without intellectual disability participated in the activity.
- They supported one another during the sessions (example: to perform the required movements).
- They enjoyed the repetition of the poses, the clear explanations and the demonstrations of the poses.



Unified soccer

During the International Summer University on Intellectual Disability, held in Trois-Rivières in 2018, a unified soccer activity was organized by Special Olympics Québec:

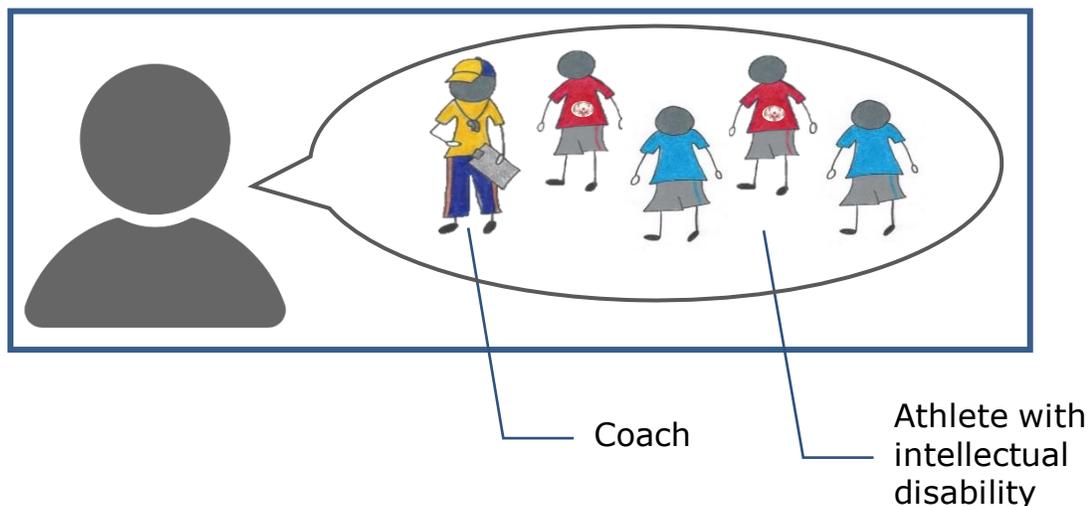
- Participating lecturers, researchers, professors, students and citizens were paired with players on the Special Olympics soccer team of Trois-Rivières.
- The activity took place over one evening to familiarize the participants with unified soccer.

The following year, an **interuniversity unified soccer** initiative came about:

- 4 teams consisting of Special Olympics soccer players and university students participated in a maximum of 8 training sessions.
- The athletes with and without intellectual disability then took part in a unified soccer tournament in Trois-Rivières.



Strategy 2: Carry out Awareness-Raising Activities



- Making the **general population** aware of:
 - The **potential** of athletes with intellectual disability;
 - The **advantages** of including them.
- These activities can be achieved by:
 - Inviting people with intellectual disability to participate in **sports events** with the general population;
 - Broadcasting a **positive message** in the media (radio, television, social media, etc.) concerning successes of athletes with intellectual disability;
 - Inviting the general population to **volunteer** at sports events dedicated to people with intellectual disability;
 - **Informing**, as needed, the coaches, other athletes and significant others when an athlete with intellectual disability integrates into a group.

Example: Organize an annual event in which the population is invited to play basketball with athletes who have intellectual disability.



Advantages and Disadvantages of Awareness-Raising Activities

To determine if organizing awareness-raising activities is a good choice, it is important to know their advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages

Useful

They are useful because they promote positive attitudes of the population regarding social inclusion of people with intellectual disability.



Realistic

They are realistic and easy to organize.

Disadvantages

Insufficient

Alone, they are insufficient to significantly improve social inclusion of people with intellectual disability if:

- They do not enable real meetings between athletes with intellectual disability and the general population;
- They are not held recurrently (example: if they occur only once).



Carrying out Awareness-Raising Activities

Here are a few recommendations to help organize awareness-raising activities and optimize their repercussions for social inclusion.

1. Encourage meetings between the general population and athletes with intellectual disability

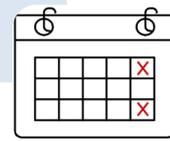
Example: Invite the general population to a friendly game with athletes who have intellectual disability.

2. Use these activities as levers for the implementation of other strategies

Example: Organize a one-day swimming activity assembling athletes with and without intellectual disability before organizing a unified swimming activity on a regular basis.

3. Favour long-term or recurrent activities

Example: Every year, during the same period.



4. Use varied means to broadcast awareness messages

Example: Radio, television, social media.

5. Develop partnerships with organizations that are known in the community

Example: With well-known sports clubs or with organizations that support people with intellectual disability.



6. Team up with a spokesperson to broadcast awareness messages

Example: Team up with a public figure or with an athlete who has intellectual disability and an inspiring story.



Inspirational Awareness-Raising Initiatives



Radio-Canada's Social Integration Challenge

During the 2018 Pentathlon des neiges in Québec City, Radio-Canada's Social Integration Challenge came about:

- The Pentathlon des neiges is a **sports event for the general population** where the participants carry out a relay race of 5 disciplines (cycling, running, cross-country skiing, skating and snowshoeing).
- The rules were changed to be more flexible for the Social Integration Challenge.
- The population was invited to **participate alongside people with intellectual disability**, autism spectrum disorder or a mental health disorder.
- A host from Téléjournal Québec was the **spokesperson**.



Motion Ball Event

This event, organized by Special Olympics, is a marathon of inclusive sports:

- It includes various sports like soccer and basketball.
- Each year, it assembles a few athletes with intellectual disability and some students.
- It aims to, among other things, **raise awareness** among students of the importance of social inclusion.
- You can watch the following video about the event organized at McGill University: [Motion Ball](#).



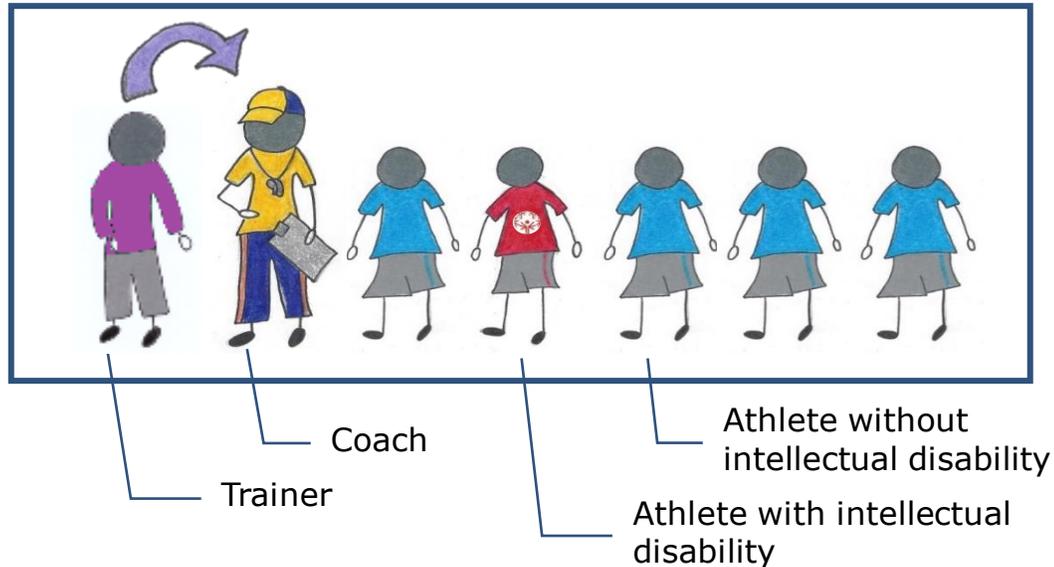
Did you know that?

The Social Integration Challenge could also be seen as a unified activity. In fact, it allowed a group of athletes, of whom about half had intellectual disability, to practice sports together.

Therefore, various strategies can be **combined** to develop initiatives with **greater potential for impacting** social inclusion.



Strategy 3: Develop and Offer Training for Coaches



- **Equip coaches** who include one or more athletes who have intellectual disability in a group with athletes without intellectual disability.
- Training can be provided **in person or online**.
- Ideally, it would be **accessible** to:
 - Coaches of activities offered by cities or municipalities;
 - Coaches of unified activities;
 - Physical education teachers in schools.

Example: A short video explaining how to adapt instructions for athletes with intellectual disability is sent to all soccer club coaches in the city.



Advantages and Disadvantages of Training Coaches

To determine if developing training for coaches is a good choice, it is important to know its advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages



Understanding the needs

It helps coaches better understand the needs of athletes with intellectual disability.

Openness to inclusion

It can foster coaches' openness to including people with intellectual disability in sports activities.

Disadvantages



Obstacles to its implementation

Several obstacles hinder its implementation:

- Staff turnover in sports clubs, which makes it difficult to train all the coaches in a same club;
- The costs associated with training;
- Coaches' mitigated interest in taking the training, especially if it is not part of their basic training.

Insufficient

It is not sufficient for improving social inclusion of people with intellectual disability:

- If no support is offered to coaches after the training;
- If coaches receive only a one-off training session.



Implementing Training for Coaches

Here are a few recommendations to help implement training for coaches and optimize its repercussions for social inclusion.

1. Raise awareness among coaches of the inclusion of athletes with intellectual disability in their team

Example: Inform coaches that athletes with intellectual disability could eventually integrate their team.

2. Build training sessions in the form of short videos

Example: Create a narrated video, of approximately 5 minutes, about welcoming an athlete with intellectual disability in a regular team.



3. Use existing resources

Example: Draw inspiration from the content offered by Special Olympics to coaches of its specialized activities.

4. Cover subjects that concern coaches

Example: How to create a climate favorable to inclusion. How to make your instructions more efficient.

⊕ These videos are available in [Appendix 3](#) (pp. 56-58).

5. Include testimonies

Example: Include an excerpt where an athlete with intellectual disability explains how the coach helps him or her.



6. Incorporate the training into training programs that are already offered by the sports federations

Example: Links with the basic training of the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) or with the Special Olympics program.

7. Make additional resources available to consult once the training is over

Example: Propose an online forum so coaches can share their winning strategies.



Inspirational Coach Training Initiatives



Training for “Coaching Athletes with a Disability”

In 2017, the Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) launched a training module called “Coaching Athletes with a Disability”:

- It consists of online training that lasts about 45 minutes;
- It was developed in collaboration with the Canadian Paralympic Committee and Special Olympics Canada;
- It is recognized by the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP);
- Its purpose is to equip coaches who have never trained athletes with a disability to promote their inclusion.

For more information concerning this training, you can go to the [CAC’s website](#).



Special Olympics Training

Since 1989, Special Olympics Canada and the Coaching Association of Canada have been offering training to support coaches of athletes with intellectual disability:

- “Level 1 Technical” training is presented in a face-to-face setting and lasts 9 hours.
- It enables coaches to acquire knowledge related to:
 - Planning and modifying a training session;
 - Analyzing performance;
 - Supporting athletes with intellectual disability in training and competition.
- Special Olympics also offers the “Level 2 Technical” class, which provides more in-depth training in a sport of the coach’s choice.

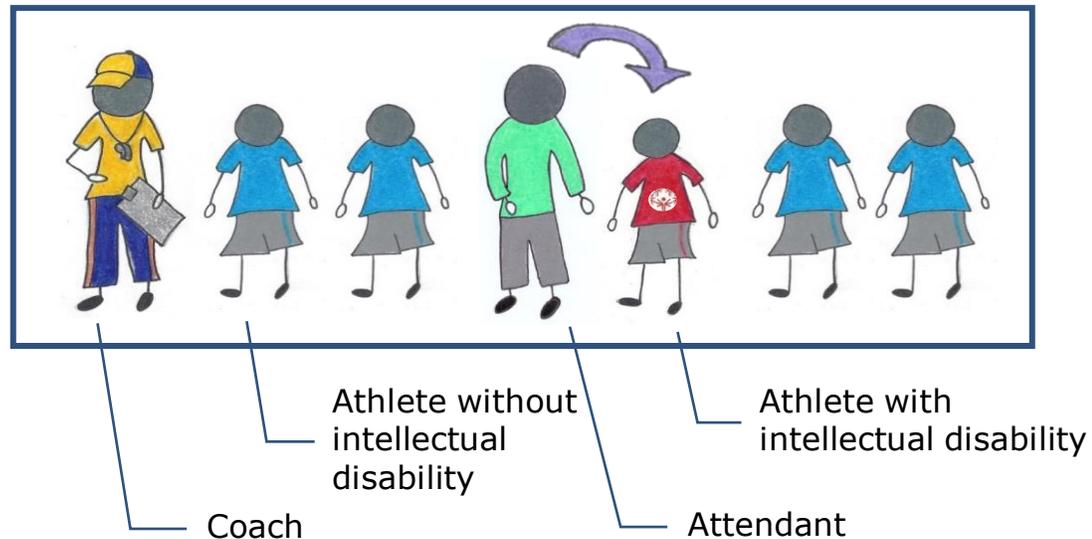
To obtain more details concerning these training programs, you can contact [Special Olympics Québec](#).



Given the limited availability of training for coaches, the research team developed 2 short training videos ([Appendix 3](#), pp. 56-58).



Strategy 4: Offer Support From an Attendant



- An athlete who has intellectual disability receives **support from an attendant** to foster the athlete's inclusion in a **regular** group with athletes without intellectual disability.
 - The attendant **is not part** of the group;
 - The attendant is **present** during training sessions and competitions.
- The attendant's **roles** can be to:
 - Clarify the explanations;
 - Encourage the athlete with intellectual disability;
 - Help the athlete during transitions;
 - Promote positive relationships with the rest of the group.

Example: An athlete with intellectual disability is included in a regular soccer team. During all the training sessions and tournaments, a volunteer student helps the athlete by clarifying the coach's instructions as needed and encouraging the athlete to persevere when difficulties arise.



Advantages and Disadvantages of Support From an Attendant

To determine if implementing support from an attendant is a good choice, it is important to know its advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages



Helps the athlete

The attendant offers the athlete support to help him or her:

- Overcome difficulties encountered;
- Keep trying by motivating him or her.

Reassuring for the coach

It may be reassuring for the coach to have an attendant dedicated specifically to the athlete with intellectual disability.

Disadvantages



Effects on social inclusion

The presence of an attendant may limit inclusion in the group because:

- This support is less normalizing than other strategies, such as support from a teammate;
- Development of the athlete's autonomy may be limited if the attendant provides more help than necessary (example: interactions between the athlete and his or her teammates may be limited if the attendant often speaks on his or her behalf).

The challenge of finding an attendant

It may be difficult to find an attendant because of:

- The rarity of interested persons;
- A lack of financial resources.



Implementing Support From an Attendant

Here are a few recommendations to help implement support from an attendant and optimize its repercussions on social inclusion.

1. Offer training to the attendant

Example: Equip the attendant so he or she can help the athlete become more autonomous in establishing relationships with the other athletes.



2. Make sure the attendant adapts the level of assistance provided according to the athlete's abilities.

Example: Clarify the coach's instructions only when the athlete does not seem to understand, rather than doing so from the outset.



3. Consider recruiting an attendant who is studying in a related field.

Example: Choose a student in occupational therapy, social work, special education or kinesiology.



4. Choose an attendant who practices the target sport

Example: Choose a soccer player to accompany an athlete with intellectual disability who wishes to integrate into a regular soccer team.

5. Make sure the support from an attendant still meets the needs of the athlete with intellectual disability

- Re-evaluate regularly whether the athlete needs this support.
Example: Re-evaluate at the beginning of each season.
- Change the attendant's role according to the level of assistance required by the athlete.
Example: The attendant may be decreasingly present in the field.
- Implement another strategy if the presence of an attendant is no longer required.
Example: Support from a resource person.



Inspirational Initiative to Offer Support From an Attendant



Attendant in a day camp

In Lévis, like in other cities in Québec, an attendant service is offered in regular day camps for children from 5 to 12 years old with specific supervision needs.

- Accompaniment in, among others, physical and sports activities at the day camp is offered at no additional charge for the parents.
- All attendants follow basic training regarding accompaniment in recreational settings for people with disabilities, adaptation of programming for people with disabilities and first aid.
- The attendant provides support all day to foster social inclusion by adapting the activities to the child's capacities.
- The attendant is supervised by a person responsible for integration who supervises attendants and supports them in their interventions. As needed, the child's support worker from the health network or school environment may also provide advice.



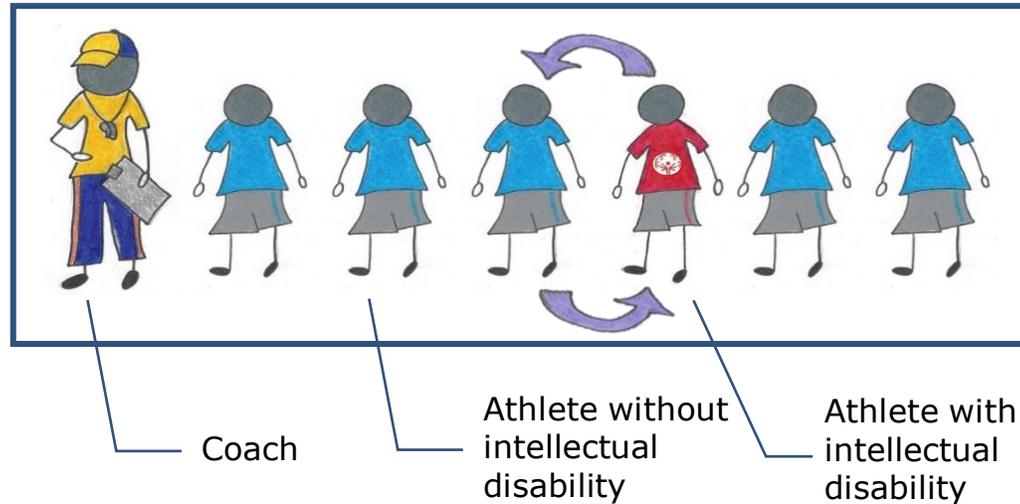
Did you know that?

In Québec, there is a **financial assistance** program for organizations that offer support from an attendant, among others in regular sports activities (Financial assistance for regional recreation authorities for individuals with disabilities).

The assistance provided helps cover part of the expenses associated with accompaniment. For more information, you can contact the organization responsible for the program in your area. Its contact information is on the website of the [ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur](#).



Strategy 5: Offer Support From a Teammate



- An athlete with intellectual disability receives **help from a teammate** to foster the athlete's inclusion in a **regular** group with athletes without intellectual disability.
 - The teammate is an athlete who **is part** of the group;
 - The teammate is **present** during training and competitions.
- The teammate's **roles** can be to :
 - Clarify explanations;
 - Help the athlete during transitions;
 - Encourage positive contacts with the other athletes.

Example: An athlete with intellectual disability participates in a spinning class offered by an organization in his municipality. The athlete is paired with another person who trains in the same spinning group. The person offers the athlete assistance when needed to help him understand the proposed exercises. They encourage each other.



Advantages and Disadvantages of Support From a Teammate

To determine if implementing support from a teammate is a good choice, it is important to know its advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages



Outcomes for social inclusion

It fosters the development of positive relationships and mutual assistance.

Normalizing

It is more normalizing than support from an attendant because the teammate is part of the team.

Rewarding

It may be rewarding for the teammates to become models for the athletes with whom they are paired.

Resources

It requires few resources.

Disadvantages



Difficult to implement

Its implementation may be more difficult with some athletes, like the younger ones or those with more severe intellectual disability.

Less reassuring

This type of support may be less reassuring for coaches than support from an attendant because they:

- May have to supervise the support provided by the teammate;
- Receive no outside assistance.



Implementing Support From a Teammate

Here are a few recommendations to help implement support from a teammate and optimize its outcomes for social inclusion.

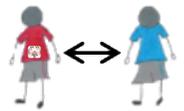
1. Inform the teammate and the athlete with intellectual disability of the ways to help each other

Example: Ask the teammate to reword the coach's instructions when the athlete doesn't seem to understand, encourage the athletes to high-five at the end of the training session.



2. Facilitate contact between the teammate and the athlete with intellectual disability before implementing the support

- If the athlete with intellectual disability is new to the group, let him or her meet and establish a relationship with the teammate who will be providing the support;
- If the athlete with intellectual disability is already part of the group, choose a teammate with whom the athlete has an affinity.



3. Consider several teammates so those providing support can alternate regularly

Example: A teammate provides support for one week and another one does it the following week.

4. Make sure a responsible person can provide support to the teammate in case of difficulties

Example: A health professional who knows the athlete with intellectual disability gives advice to the teammate as needed.



5. Make sure the support from a teammate still meets the needs of the athlete with intellectual disability

- Re-evaluate regularly whether the athlete needs this support.
Example: Re-evaluate at the beginning of each season.
- Change the teammate's role according to the level of assistance required by the athlete.
Example: The teammate may be less and less present.
- Implement another strategy if the presence of a teammate is no longer required.
Example: Support from a resource person.



Inspirational Initiative to Offer Support From a Teammate



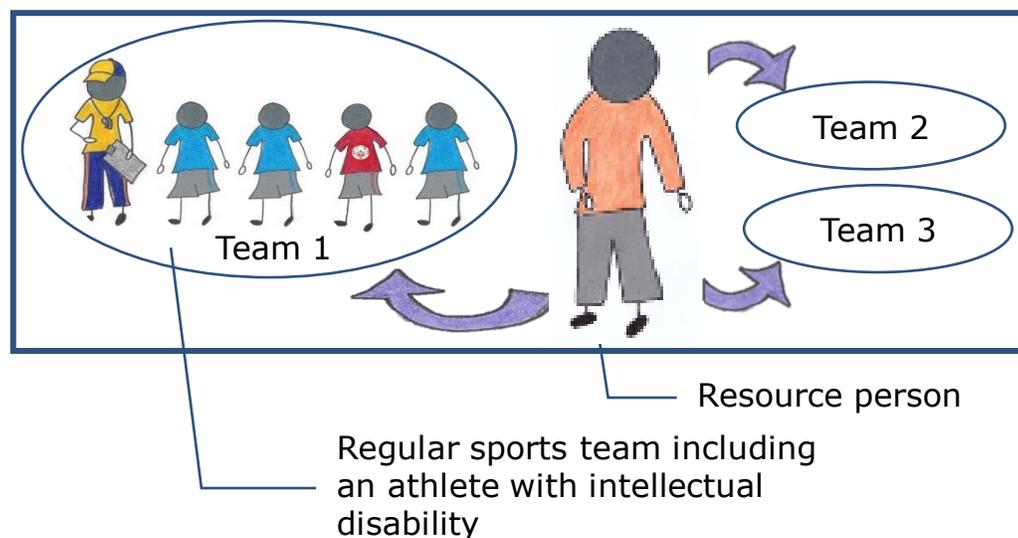
Support From Teammates in a Running Club

In Québec City, an assistant coach from a Special Olympics track and field group invited one of the runners with intellectual disability to join a **regular running club, Le coureur nordique**, of which she was a member:

- She offered to team up with the athlete and help him so he could participate in the training sessions.
- At first, **more support** was provided and it consisted in:
 - going to the training sessions with the athlete who had intellectual disability;
 - introducing him to the other runners in the club and including him in informal conversations;
 - clarifying the instructions and demonstrating the exercises;
 - clarifying the safety instructions (example: how to stay with the group and manage transitions in the streets).
- Two **other teammates** replaced the one who had launched the initiative when she left the running club.
 - The assistance provided **gradually decreased**. The coach or a teammate provides support to the runner only as needed. He is part of the group and no longer needs official support.
 - The teammates providing support **have benefitted also** from this relationship with the athlete who has intellectual disability. His great assiduity, good humour and encouragement have motivated them to save a spot in their schedule to go running.



Strategy 6: Offer Support From a Resource Person



- **A resource person provides support** to foster inclusion of an athlete with intellectual disability in a group.
 - The resource person is **available as needed**, but is not always present during the activities;
 - The resource person is usually **a support worker** (example: special education teacher);
 - The resource person may be contacted as needed by the parents, coaches and athletes when they encounter difficulties.
- The resource person has good knowledge of:
 - The strategies to foster inclusion through sports;
 - The athlete with intellectual disability;
 - The family of the athlete with intellectual disability.

Example: A soccer player with intellectual disability is included in a city's regular team. A conflict arises between this player and other players on the team during a training session. The coach calls the resource person for advice on how to manage the situation with the group. The resource person could be present during this review. 



Advantages and Disadvantages of Support From a Resource Person

To determine if implementing support from a resource person is a good choice, it is important to know its advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages

Better equipped

When the resource person provides advice to the coaches, this type of support allows them to be better equipped to foster inclusion of athletes with intellectual disability in their group.

Reassuring

It is reassuring for the coach to know that he or she can ask the resource person for help as needed.

Autonomy

The distance of the resource person gives greater autonomy to the athlete with intellectual disability because the resource person is not always there.

Disadvantages

Limited outcomes for inclusion

Its outcomes for inclusion may be limited:

- If it is the only strategy implemented;
- If the resource person is not available when the coach needs him or her.

Time and resources required

Offering support from a resource person requires time and resources that are not always available.



Implementing Support From a Resource Person

Here are a few recommendations to help implement support from a resource person and optimize its outcomes for social inclusion.

1. Make sure the resource person:

- Is familiar with intellectual disability;
- If possible, knows the included athlete with intellectual disability and his family.



2. Have the resource person set up a welcoming environment

Example: The resource person provides advice or training to the coaches on communicating with athletes who have intellectual disabilities and establishes the foundations of support from an attendant or a teammate.



3. Make sure the resource person is available to provide assistance in crisis situations

Example: Ask the resource person to be available to receive calls during the activities, especially when the support begins.



4. Make sure the support from a resource person still meets the needs

- Re-evaluate regularly whether the level of assistance provided meets the athlete's needs;
Example: Re-evaluate at the beginning of each season
- Add another type of support if the athlete requires a higher level of assistance than that offered by the resource person;
Example: Implement support from peers in addition to support from the resource person
- Stop the support from a resource person if it is no longer necessary.



Inspirational Initiatives to Offer Support From a Resource Person

To date, very few initiatives to offer support from a resource person have been found in regular sports contexts in Québec. However, those implemented in day camps can serve as inspiration.



Resource person from the rehabilitation centre

Special education teachers from a rehabilitation centre specialized in intellectual disability act as resource persons to foster inclusion of children with intellectual disability in day camps:

- Children being offered this support receive services from the rehabilitation centre.
- The special education teacher acting as a resource person:
 - Knows intellectual disability and the inclusion strategies;
 - Has access to the files on the children with intellectual disability;
 - Offers training on social inclusion to the camp coordinators, leaders and attendants.



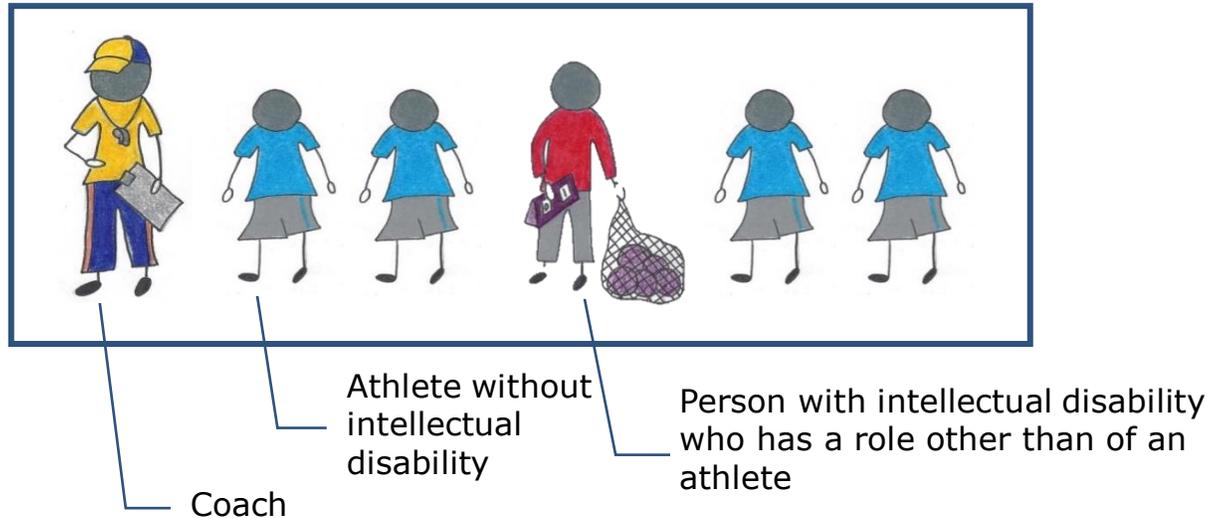
Support workers for inclusion in day camps

In Québec City, support workers are hired every year by a day camp to help the staff include children with special needs in regular groups:

- They equip the staff with ways to intervene and with the strategies to implement.
- They have previously worked in a camp and often study in a related field (examples: occupational therapy, psychoeducation).
- At the beginning of the summer, they gather information:
 - From the parents, from professionals who know the children and from support workers who were there the previous summer;
 - Concerning diagnoses, interests, strengths and challenges, as well as levels of functioning in the activities and which strategies to favour (example: communication strategies).



Strategy 7: Encourage Involvement in a Role Other Than of an Athlete



- A person with intellectual disability **becomes involved in various ways** during the activities of a **regular** sports group with athletes without intellectual disability.
 - The person is present during training sessions and competitions, but does **not** participate **as an athlete**;
 - The person may practice sports in another context like in specialized activities organized by Special Olympics or in unified activities.
- The **role** of the person with intellectual disability might include:
 - Transporting the necessary materials during training sessions;
 - Helping the referees or the scorekeepers in their respective duties;
 - Cheering on the team and being involved as assistant coach.

Example: A person with intellectual disability becomes involved in a skating club as assistant coach for beginner skaters. The person is also a member of the Special Olympics skating club as an athlete with other athletes who have intellectual disability.



Advantages and Disadvantages of Involvement in a Role Other Than of an Athlete

To determine if involvement in a role other than of an athlete is a good choice, it is important to know its advantages and disadvantages.

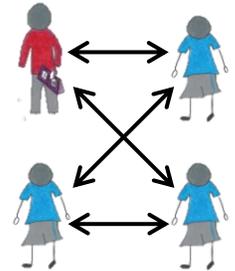
Advantages



Outcomes for social inclusion

It allows people with intellectual disability to:

- Develop relationships with athletes without disability;
- Engage in a role that contributes to their self-worth in a regular sports context in their community;
- Develop a sense of belonging.



Disadvantages



Prejudice

If this strategy is not used properly, it could reinforce prejudice against people with intellectual disability.

Less active

People are less physically active in this strategy if they do not have the opportunity to move outside their involvement in a role other than of an athlete.



Implementing Involvement in a Role Other Than of an Athlete

Here are a few recommendations to help implement involvement in a role other than of an athlete and optimize its outcomes for social inclusion.

1. Choose a role that contributes to the person's self-worth

Consider the person's interests, strengths and capacities.

Example: A coach proposes to a person with intellectual disability to be the assistant coach for the team. The coach asks the person to throw passes to the players during half-time periods, a task that the person particularly likes and is able to do.

2. Make sure the person has opportunities to be physically active

Allow the person to:

- Move with the team at certain times during the activities.
Example: The person participates in the warmup with the soccer team when involved as assistant coach.
- Practice sports in another context in addition to this involvement.
Example: The person is a member of a Special Olympics running club and helps the referee during a regular team's soccer games.



3. Make sure the role is valued by the members of the team

As needed, combine this strategy with an awareness-raising activity.

Examples: Present a short video in which athletes with intellectual disability share their experience, what it brings them and why they like being involved in a role other than of an athlete.

Ask members of the team about an important role that the person with intellectual disability could play to support them.



Inspirational Initiatives to Encourage Involvement in a Role Other Than of an Athlete

To date, very few initiatives to involve people with intellectual disability in a role other than of an athlete have been found in Québec. However, the following experiences may serve as inspiration.



Assistant coach of a university soccer team

At Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières, a young man with intellectual disability is part of the staff of assistant coaches for the soccer team.

- His duties consist in bringing and gathering the materials needed for the team's training sessions and games.
- The young man has created relationships with the members of the team based on a common interest. He encourages them when they lose a game.
- The players feel that his integration constitutes a real asset for the team.



Football Fandom

In the United Kingdom, a study was conducted on the inclusion of 13 people with intellectual disability from 18 to 41 years old as fans of professional football teams.

- The football fans had the opportunity to attend all the training sessions of their team.
- 8 of the 13 participants had tickets to attend all of their team's home games.
- Most of the participants identified strongly with the team. Having a common interest helped promote social interactions with people without intellectual disability during the training sessions and games.
- However, for most of the fans, these social relationships would end when the games were over.



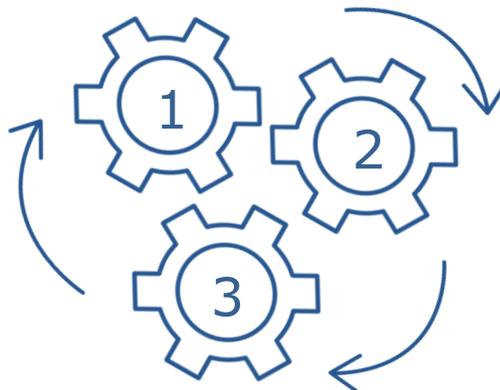
How to Promote a Positive Experience

According to Carbonneau and colleagues (2015), an inclusive leisure experience requires:

- Access to the spaces and equipment that allow significant practice of the recreational activity that meets the people's wishes and aspirations;
- Positive interactions with the other athletes;
- Engagement in a meaningful activity that is adapted to the people's capacities and that allows them to achieve their full potential.

To create a positive sport inclusion experience, **3 key elements** must be considered. These elements are interrelated and must match to enable a positive inclusive experience.

1. The people's characteristics and objectives



2. Opportunities available in the community

3. Necessary support measures

1. The people's characteristics and objectives

- Consider their wishes and capacities.

What do the people want to do?
With whom?

What are their strengths and challenges?



- With the people who have intellectual disability, select one or more **significant roles** that allow them to be active.

Examples:

- Playing soccer
- Running or walking
- Being an assistant coach

Strategy 7: Involvement in a Role Other Than of an Athlete



2. Opportunities available in the community

In which sports contexts? With whom?

Which activities are available in the community?



- Promote the creation of relationships within the person's communities (examples: school, neighbourhood, city, workplace).
- Choose a sports context that is as inclusive as possible to allow positive interactions between the athletes.
- Consider the **contexts that are available** in the community:

Specialized context



Physical and sports activities dedicated to people with intellectual disability.

Example:
With Special Olympics, Adaptavie or other organizations offering dedicated activities.

Regular context



Physical and sports activities intended for the general population.

Example:
Opportunities to move offered to everyone in the community (yoga, walking club, etc.).

Unified context



Physical and sports activities in which half the athletes have intellectual disability and the other half do not.

Example:
Special Olympics unified soccer initiatives.

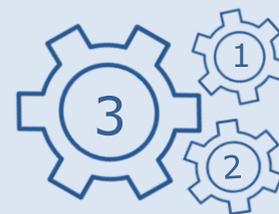


Strategy 1:
Unified Activities

The Special Olympics organization offers activities in specialized contexts as well as unified activities (Appendix 1, p. 53).

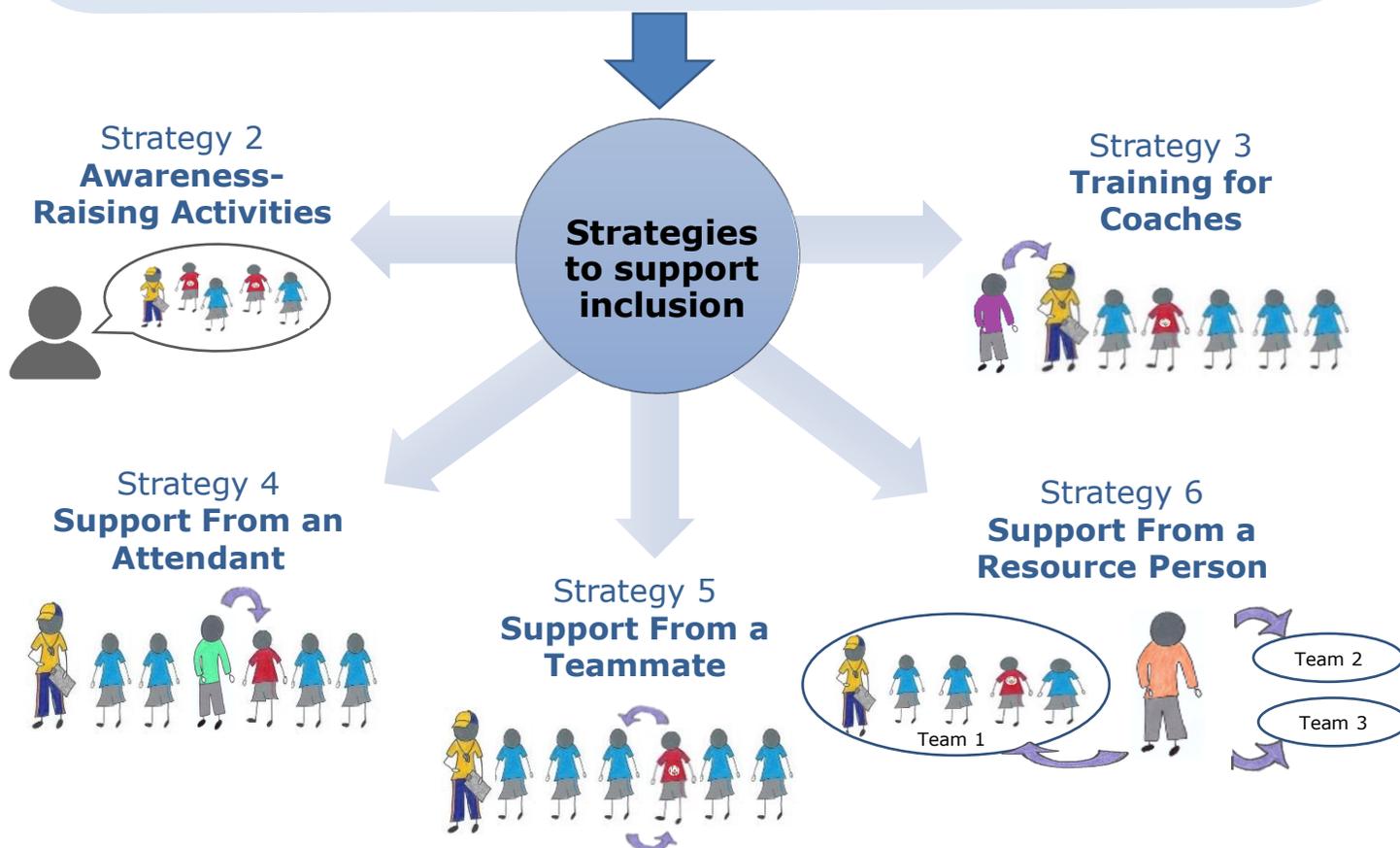


3. Necessary support measures



Which support measures are required to make the experience positive?

- Consider the fit between the requirements of the activity and the capacities of the athlete or athletes;
- Consider the **context of inclusion** (examples: type of physical or sports activity practiced, resources, recreational or competitive group, age and skills of the other athletes);
- Favour support that helps provide the athletes with a sports experience as similar as possible to the experience of their peers;
- Consider also the **advantages and disadvantages** of each strategy to foster inclusion.



Combinations with Good Potential for Social Inclusion

Most of the time, the use of a combination of strategies to foster inclusion through sports can optimize the **potential for social inclusion**.

To inspire you, 4 examples of combinations of strategies are presented on the following pages:

1. Inclusion in a regular basketball team



2. Inclusion in a regular gymnastics group



3. Inclusive fitness activity



4. Relay race in high schools



Be creative in combining strategies to foster inclusion through sports!



Consult the coaches as well as the athlete or athletes included regarding their perception of the support measures required. Remember also to re-evaluate if the support is still necessary.



Combinations of Strategies with Good Potential for Social Inclusion

Example 1: Inclusion in a regular basketball team

An athlete with intellectual disability integrates into a regular basketball team as part of an extracurricular activity in elementary school. The following support measures are implemented.



1. **Awareness-raising** measures to inform the other athletes and their parents about the potential of the athlete with intellectual disability and about the advantages of inclusion.

Strategy 2
Awareness-Raising Activities



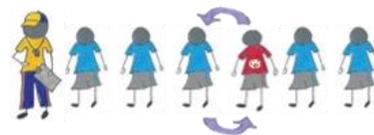
2. Support from an **attendant**, a volunteer from an organization involved in intellectual disability, to offer support during the first sessions. The attendant encourages participation of the athlete with intellectual disability and explains the rules to him.

Strategy 4
Support From an Attendant



3. When the athlete becomes more autonomous, the attendant invites a peer to support the **teammate** and helps the peer take on the new role.

Strategy 5
Support From a Teammate



4. If needed, the volunteer who acted as attendant is available as a **resource person** but is rarely present.

Strategy 6
Support From a Resource Person



Combinations of Strategies with Good Potential for Social Inclusion

Example 2: Inclusion in a regular gymnastics group

An athlete with intellectual disability is registered for a 12-week semester of recreational gymnastics at the gymnastics club in her area. She is integrated into a group of 10 children without intellectual disability who have sports skills similar to hers.



1. **Training** for the coach and the apprentice coach of the gymnastics club involved with the athlete, using the 2 short videos provided in this guide.



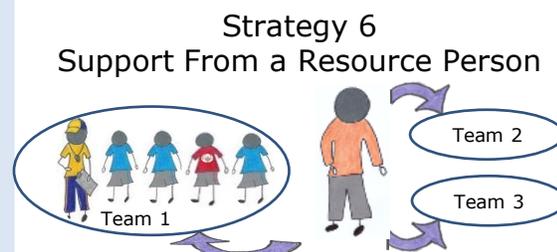
2. **Awareness-raising** activity: At the beginning of the semester, the club's coordinator assembles the parents and the athletes to remind them of the inclusive values of the organization and of the attitudes that are expected towards diversity.



3. **Support from an attendant:** The apprentice coach, who has good knowledge of gymnastics, accompanies the athlete with intellectual disability in performing the movements and in transitions between workshops. The apprentice coach provides occasional support to other gymnasts.



4. As needed, a **resource person** is available to support the coach, the attendant or the family of the athlete with intellectual disability (e.g. the athlete's support worker from the rehabilitation centre).



Combinations of Strategies with Good Potential for Social Inclusion

Example 3: Inclusive fitness activity

A few athletes with intellectual disability participate in a *Health Challenge* in their community. The event, lasting 8 weeks, consists in participating in outdoor fitness activities. It is organized by the municipality's recreation department, which sent out invitations to the general population and asked organizations dedicated to people with disabilities to invite their members. The last training session is followed by a celebration that is open to everyone so that people can socialize.



1. Implementation of a **Unified** fitness activity.



2. **Awareness-raising** activities:

- Awareness-raising video about the inclusive physical or sports activity;
- Advertising about the inclusive initiative in social networks and with organizations to invite the population to become involved in the unified activity for 8 weeks.



3. **Training** for the coach on the ways to promote a culture of inclusion and foster team spirit in an inclusive context and on the importance of establishing a common goal for all the athletes.



4. **Support from a teammate:** Training of twosomes who must help each other take up certain challenges.



Combinations of Strategies with Good Potential for Social Inclusion

Example 4: Relay race in high schools

Each year, unified teams are formed in high schools. They are comprised of students from regular and specialized classes. At the end of each quarter, these teams take part in a friendly relay race in which each person must take on a challenge. The team demonstrating the most mutual assistance and team spirit wins the prize.



1. Formation of **unified teams** that include students with and without disabilities to participate in a sports event in school.
2. **Awareness-raising** activities:
 - Short video presenting the inclusive initiative to the students before the activity begins.
 - Presence of a special guest at the last race as a spokesperson.
 - Advertising on the radio and in the local paper.
3. The players are invited to help and encourage one another, like in the **Support From a Teammate** strategy.
4. A player with intellectual disability **becomes involved in a role other than of an athlete**, in addition to that of athlete, based on his interests: assistant coach, scorekeeper or equipment manager.



Self-Evaluation Tools



Introduction to the Self-Evaluation

Once you have a good grasp of the 7 strategies to foster inclusion through sports, this section allows you to review your experience to identify the strong points and those needing improvement. You are offered **2 tools**:

1 A self-evaluation grid intended for the organizers of the initiative

It focuses on the aspects that are essential to consider when organizing the activity and allows the organizers to reflect on its implementation. This self-evaluation grid may be used as a reflection tool before, during or after the implementation of a strategy to foster inclusion through sports.

The self-evaluation grid comprises 2 sections:

Section 1:

Elements that are essential to consider for each inclusion strategy

Section 2:

General evaluation of your experience

2 An evaluation sheet for the participants in the activity

This sheet is useful for finding out how satisfied the participants are as well as for evaluating how the sports activity contributes to social inclusion of people with intellectual disability.



Self-Evaluation Grid (Section 1)

Initiative evaluated: _____ Date: _____

Instructions: Check off the boxes of the strategies that apply on the left.
Next, respond to the corresponding statements on the right.

Strategies used	Essential elements for implementing each strategy	Yes	More or less	No
1 Unified activities <input type="checkbox"/>	A common goal for all the athletes is set at the beginning of the activity.			
	The activity takes place in a non-competitive context.			
	The athletes have similar sports skills.			
2 Awareness-Raising Activities <input type="checkbox"/>	Various means are used to raise awareness.			
	The general population and the athletes with intellectual disability have the opportunity to meet (sports events, volunteering).			
	Awareness-raising is used as a lever and is combined with another strategy to foster inclusion through sports.			
3 Training for Coaches <input type="checkbox"/>	The topics of concern to the coaches are covered (communicating with an athlete who has intellectual disability, adapting the instructions).			
	The training offered presents concrete aspects to guide the intervention (short videos, testimonials).			
	Supplementary resources are available to the coaches after the training (discussion forum, support from a resource person).			
4 Support From an Attendant <input type="checkbox"/>	Training is offered to the attendant.			
	The attendant facilitates contacts with the other athletes/coaches.			
	The support offered is adapted to the athlete's needs.			
	The support is re-evaluated to ensure that it still meets a need.			
5 Support From a Teammate <input type="checkbox"/>	The athlete and the teammate met before the activity began.			
	The athlete and the teammate were informed of ways to help each other.			
	The teammate facilitates contacts with the other athletes/coaches.			
	The support offered is adapted to the athlete's needs.			
	The support is re-evaluated to ensure that it still meets a need.			
	The possibility of changing support teammates was considered.			
6 Support From a Resource Person <input type="checkbox"/>	A resource person is available if needed.			
	The resource person is familiar with intellectual disability.			
	The resource person knows the athlete and the athlete's family.			
	The support offered is adapted to the athlete's needs.			
	The support is re-evaluated to ensure that it still meets a need.			
7 Involvement in a Role Other Than of an Athlete <input type="checkbox"/>	The resource person is available to set up a welcoming environment.			
	The resource person is available in crisis situations.			
	The person with intellectual disability plays a role that is meaningful to him or her (according to his or her interests and capacities).			
	The teammates value the role of the person with intellectual disability in their team.			
	The person with intellectual disability has opportunities to be physically active (in this role or in other involvements).			



Self-Evaluation Grid (Section 2)

Instruction: Check off the box that corresponds to the evaluation of your experience.

	Yes	More or less	No	Does not apply
Preparation of the initiative				
The characteristics of the athlete or athletes (age, capacities, interests), the type of physical or sports activity (individual or team, recreational or competitive) and the resources available were considered.				
The advantages and disadvantages of the various strategies to foster inclusion through sports were considered for choosing one or several strategies that would encourage positive relationships between the participants and instill a sense of belonging to the group.				
Implementation of the initiative				
A message of mutual assistance and of inclusion was circulated.				
The potential of athletes with intellectual disability was highlighted.				
The advantages of inclusion were emphasized.				
Changes were made to the strategies as needed to adapt to the realities of the various people involved.				
The athletes with and without intellectual disability had the opportunity to interact on a regular basis (more than once).				
Place for people with intellectual disability				
The person/people with intellectual disability played a role that corresponded to his/her/their wishes and capacities.				
The athletes with and without intellectual disability had positive interactions.				
The activity allowed the athletes to help one another.				
The athletes are part of a same community (e.g. neighbourhood, municipality) where they might have the chance to see each other again.				
The athletes meet outside the training sessions to participate in social or sports activities.				

What do you remember about this experience?

Things you liked	Difficulties encountered	Ideas for next time



Assessment Sheet for Participants in the Sports Activity



Activity: _____

Period: _____

I am an athlete: with intellectual disability (e.g. Special Olympics athlete)
 without intellectual disability

INSTRUCTIONS

As needed, feel free to ask for help filling out this sheet.

- Think about the sports activity in which you participated. 
- For each of the sentences in the table, check off the box that corresponds to your degree of agreement.

Sentences (statements)	Yes 	Yes, but 	No, but 	No 	Don't know ?
I liked what I was doing in the activity.					
I played a role that is important to me in the activity.					
I liked this sports activity.					
I made friends during this activity.					
I saw one or more teammates again in other locations.					
After this activity...					
I feel more comfortable speaking with people who have intellectual disabilities.					
I feel more comfortable speaking with people who have no intellectual disabilities.					
I have improved my skills in the physical activity or sport practiced.					
I exercise more every week.					
I have more friends with intellectual disabilities.					
I have more friends without intellectual disabilities.					

I would participate in this activity again. Yes No I would recommend this activity to a friend. Yes No

When I think about the activity:

What I liked the most	What I liked the least	My ideas for the next time



Conclusion

The objective of this guide is to promote the use of physical and sports activities to their full potential to foster social inclusion of people with intellectual disability. In it, you discovered 7 strategies to foster inclusion through sports that emerged from a research project.

We ask you to reflect on the ways you can use these strategies in your context:

- Do you want to develop a unified initiative in your community?
- Do you want to act as a resource person for coaches welcoming an athlete with intellectual disability?
- Do you want to offer support to an athlete with intellectual disability as a teammate or an attendant?
- Do you want to advocate better support for inclusion through sports?

We hope that you will find this guide useful for helping optimize the effect of physical and sports activities on social inclusion. Do not hesitate to share this guide, combine strategies and be creative, to develop projects adapted to your context and thus contribute to the development of communities that are more inclusive!

ENJOY YOUR WORKOUT!



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Appendix 1

For More Information on Special Olympics

The Special Olympics' mission is to enrich the lives of people with intellectual disability through sports and healthy lifestyles. This **not-for-profit organization** makes sports practice **more accessible** for people with intellectual disability. The organization offers **recreational** and **competitive** activities in various disciplines, such as track and field, soccer, running, cross-country skiing and speed skating. Nearly 47,500 Canadians are registered for Special Olympics activities, which are offered in both specialized and unified contexts.

The organization aims also to **raise** the population's **awareness** and to **increase its support** for people with intellectual disability. It does this by organizing various large-scale events and by involving community members as volunteers within the organization.

For more information on the organization or to get involved, you can go to the [Special Olympics Canada](#) or [Special Olympics Québec](#) website.



Appendix 2

Information on the Research Project

The research project was carried out thanks to funding from Special Olympics Canada and the Fonds de recherche du Québec – Société et culture.

Literature review



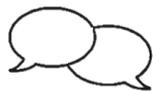
Grandisson, Marcotte, Niquette, & Milot, 2019

The literature review enabled the research team to identify and document the strategies using physical and sports activities to foster social inclusion of people with intellectual disability.

The strategies identified were then **validated with experts** (1 athlete with intellectual disability, 1 parent and 2 representatives from specialized and regular sports communities).

This process was used to identify the **7 strategies to foster inclusion** through sports presented in this guide.

Discussion groups



Grandisson, Marcotte, Milot, Allaire, & Lamontagne, 2019

The discussion groups made it possible to **document the viewpoints** of 28 **actors involved** in physical and sports activities in specialized and regular contexts with respect to the 7 previously identified strategies to foster inclusion through sports.

More specifically, the **advantages** and **disadvantages** of each of the strategies as well as the **recommendations** for their implementation were documented.

In addition to the results already presented in this guide, the discussion groups showed that, according to the participants, **awareness-raising activities** and **training for coaches** were strategies that seemed especially **relevant and necessary**, despite being perceived as largely insufficient on their own.



Online survey

Grandisson, Chrétien-Vincent, Ouellet, Marcotte, Lamontagne, & Milot, 2021

An online survey was then conducted to obtain **the opinion of the Québec sports community** (athletes, coaches, athletes' parents, volunteers, coordinators, referees and scorekeepers from regular and specialized sports contexts) **regarding the 7** previously identified **strategies**.

The participants were first asked about their openness to each of the strategies to foster inclusion through sports. From 70 to 90% of the participants reported being **favorable to the implementation of the various strategies**, which reflects a **good openness** overall of the Québec sports community regarding all the strategies to foster inclusion through sports.

Next, participants who indicated that they were or may be favorable to the strategies were asked about their **interest in becoming involved** in each of the strategies. From 48 to 72% of the respondents expressed interest in becoming involved in the implementation of the various strategies.

Finally, all the participants were asked to identify **3 strategies that they considered priorities** to implement in Québec. Here are the participants' choices:



Appendix 3

Training Videos for Coaches



Training Video 1: How to Create a Climate that Is Conducive to Inclusion



1. Get to know the athlete

- ✓ Capacities, strengths and challenges
- ✓ Objectives, interests and experiences
- ✓ Physical and medical condition



2. Raise awareness among peers

- ✓ Generally or specifically
- ✓ Everyone has strengths and challenges



3. Offer a fair challenge

- ✓ Time
- ✓ Repetitions
- ✓ Space
- ✓ Equipment used
- ✓ Support



4. Value participation and efforts

- ✓ Encourage participation
- ✓ Underscore efforts



5. Create opportunities to work together

- ✓ Activities with a common goal



6. Encourage mutual assistance

- ✓ Propose a challenge
- ✓ Implement support from peers



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sXcmo9YHzuI>

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Training Video 2: How to Make your Instructions more Efficient



1. Limit distractions



2. Catch the athlete's attention



3. Speak slowly



4. Favour simple words and short sentences



5. Present one step a time

- ✓ Sequence
- ✓ Take breaks



6. Add visual supports

- ✓ Gestures and materials
- ✓ Pictures and videos



7. Do demonstrations



8. Validate comprehension

- ✓ Question
- ✓ Allow a response time



9. Repeat



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CD2bS6Q-6m0>

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