

Pathways to Play

Decision-Making Guide:

Choosing Community Recreation Programs

Here are some questions that may help you pick activities that work for you and your child(ren) and family. Thinking about what you and your family are interested in, your goals and resources are important first steps.

1. What is your child or family interested in doing?

2. What are your goals for the activity (e.g., making friends, learning a new skill, exploring a hobby, getting physical activity, having fun?)

3. What are your resources to pay for or travel to programs and how much time do you want to spend?

4. Does your child or family need adaptive equipment or support to participate?

Here are some questions you can explore to understand the type of program being offered and ways the program or staff could support or provide what your child and family may need.

1. How many children participate at the same time?

2. What is the ratio of children to adults/staff or volunteers?

3. Are people involved in the program trained to support neurodiverse children?

4. Are parents required to attend, or can they attend with their child?

5. What are the goals of the program or activity (e.g., is a recreational or competitive program?)

6. How does the program ask for or communicate with parents about what their child needs?

7. How is the environment set up (small space; large gym, room for movement; sensory load)

8. What other programs or activities are happening at the same time (e.g., how busy is the setting with people, children and/or stimulation?)

9. Does the program provide or offer special equipment to participate without cost (e.g., adaptive bikes)?

Here are questions you can explore to learn more about the event or activity and how the program, environment and/or staff could support or provide what your child and family may need. Many organizations offer information about how they are making their programs, services and environment more accessible and inclusive on their website.

1. Does the website offer information about accessibility options and tools (e.g., what's available and when)?

2. How is the environment set up (small space; large gym, room for movement; what contributes to the sensory load)?

3. Does the website invite comments or suggestions about accessibility?

4. Are there times of day or special events that are more or less busy with people?

Here are some other ideas to help you plan ahead:

1. Check the program or event website for accessibility information. Tools such as social stories or social narratives may be helpful to plan or prepare for the activity. These tools “tell a step-by-step story,” often with pictures of the activity or event.
2. Break down the steps you need to get from your home to the activity a (e.g., travel, parking, walking to the event, waiting in line) and think about transitions. Planning ahead for transitions or breaks and packing tools that may be calming or comforting can help make your outing, event or activity go more smoothly.
3. Check the website for information on parking and restroom accessibility, complimentary admission for aides, reduced admission fees or memberships and mobility accommodations.

Where can I find more help to make decisions about play and recreational programs and choices?

1. [AS360 search tool](#)
2. Reach out directly to your service providers (e.g. OT, SLP, Psych, etc.) with specific questions.