The Accessible Playgrounds for Parents with Disabilities Project: Advocacy in San Diego

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Background

- Public parks and playgrounds serve as vital hubs for parent-child play, social inclusion, and community participation.
- These recreational areas often remain inaccessible for individuals with disabilities (Lynch et al., 2020).
- Inclusive playgrounds are often not designed for adults with disabilities, creating barriers to engagement for parents with disabilities and their children (Dalpra, 2022; Jacob et al. 2017)
- OTP's knowledge of inclusion, development, and skills in advocacy and education add an important perspective to an outdoor space interprofessional design team (Young et al., 2019).

Proposed Solution

Continue work towards development of a searchable national database of playgrounds focusing on accessibility features for parents.

Methods

The capstone project included four components:

1) Collecting data on playgrounds in San Diego using the Modified Parks for Activity and Recreation in our Communities (mPARCS) tool
2) Development of an administration manual and how-to videos for the mPARCS.
3) Advocacy with San Diego Park and Recreation Department, highlighting the self-reported accessibility needs of parents with disabilities
4) Educational programming for parents with disabilities on strategies for identifying park accessibility features to support inclusive play.

Want to Participate?

We are accepting OTD capstone students and looking for individual therapists to contribute. Contact:

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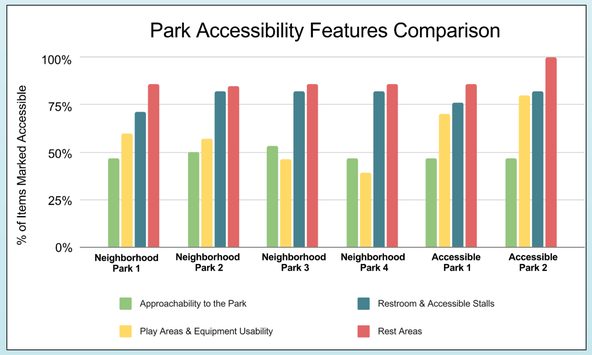
Modified PARCs (Parks for Activities and Recreation in our Communities) "Evaluation Tool for Assessing the Accessibility and Usability of Community Parks and Playgrounds"

(Perry et al., 2018; mod. Gipson Showalter)

Data Collection – San Diego Playgrounds

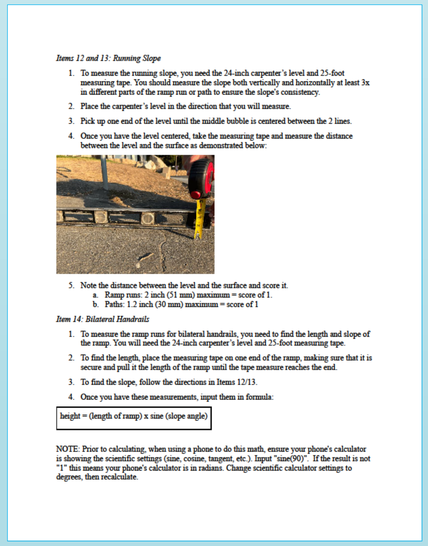


Most Common Accessibility Issues

1) Restrooms: no/malfunctioning automatic doors
2) Arm rests on chairs/benches prevent transfers from wheelchairs
3) Bus stops
   a) unstable surfaces
   b) distance from bus stop to play area
4) Play areas lacked fencing
5) Unstable walking surfaces

Administration Manual Example

Path Surfaces	Yes	No
12. Do ramp runs have a running slope no steeper than 1:12?	1	0
13. Do the main paths to park areas have a running slope no steeper than 1:20? *NOTE*: Any portion of the path with a steeper gradient may make the path unusable.	1	0
14. Are there bilateral handrails on ramp runs with a rise greater than 6 in (150 mm)?	1	0



Items 12 and 13: Running Slope

1. To measure the running slope, you need the 24-inch carpenter's level and 25-foot measuring tape. You should measure the slope both vertically and horizontally at least 3x in different parts of the ramp run or path to ensure the slope's consistency.
2. Place the carpenter's level in the direction that you will measure.
3. Pick up one end of the level until the middle bubble is centered between the 2 lines.
4. Once you have the level centered, take the measuring tape and measure the distance between the level and the surface as demonstrated below:

5. Note the distance between the level and the surface and score it.
   a. Ramp runs: 2 inch (51 mm) maximum = score of 1.
   b. Paths: 1.2 inch (30 mm) maximum = score of 1

Item 14: Bilateral Handrails

1. To measure the ramp runs for bilateral handrails, you need to find the length and slope of the ramp. You will need the 24-inch carpenter's level and 25-foot measuring tape.
2. To find the length, place the measuring tape on one end of the ramp, making sure that it is secure and pull it the length of the ramp until the tape measure reaches the end.
3. To find the slope, follow the directions in Items 12/13.
4. Once you have these measurements, input them in formula:

height = (length of ramp) x sine (slope angle)

NOTE: Prior to calculating, when using a phone to do this math, ensure your phone's calculator is showing the scientific settings (sine, cosine, tangent, etc.). Input "sine(90)". If the result is not "1" this means your phone's calculator is in radians. Change scientific calculator settings to degrees, then recalculate.

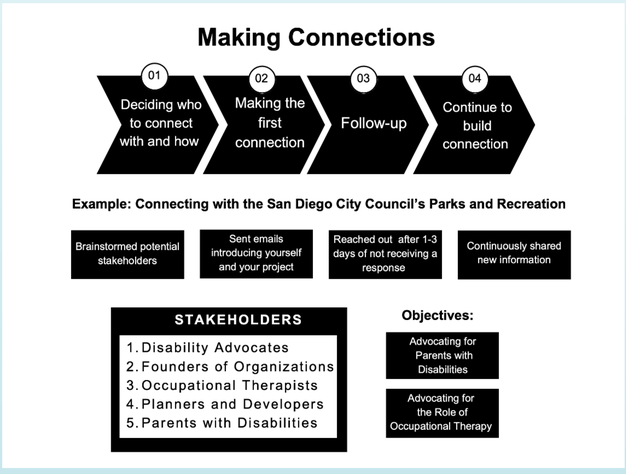
What About Your Playgrounds?

Consider a parent who uses forearm crutches as a mobility aid. The parent has a four-year-old and they are visiting a local playground. What are some challenges that might come up during this visit?

- The child was playing then urgently needed to use the restroom. Is the path to the restroom even?
- The child joins a game of tag with peers. Will they stay near the playground even if it isn't fenced?
- The child wants the parent to catch them at the bottom of the slide. Is the surface stable enough to access the area using a mobility aid?

What other environmental barriers might impact the experience of this parent and child?

Advocacy and Education



- Facilitated connection between San Diego Park and Rec and the Adaptive Parent Project (APP).
  - Set up in-person meeting at park to discuss accessibility issues.
  - Collaborated on APP-led survey of parents with disabilities about their experiences with playground accessibility.
  - Provided survey and mPARCS data to San Diego Park and Rec.
- Development of "alternative methods kit" to support play at parks with accessibility barriers.
- Presentation on advocacy, parenting with a disability, and playground accessibility.

References

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