

# Program development for promoting inclusive play for children with disabilities

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### BACKGROUND

#### Purpose

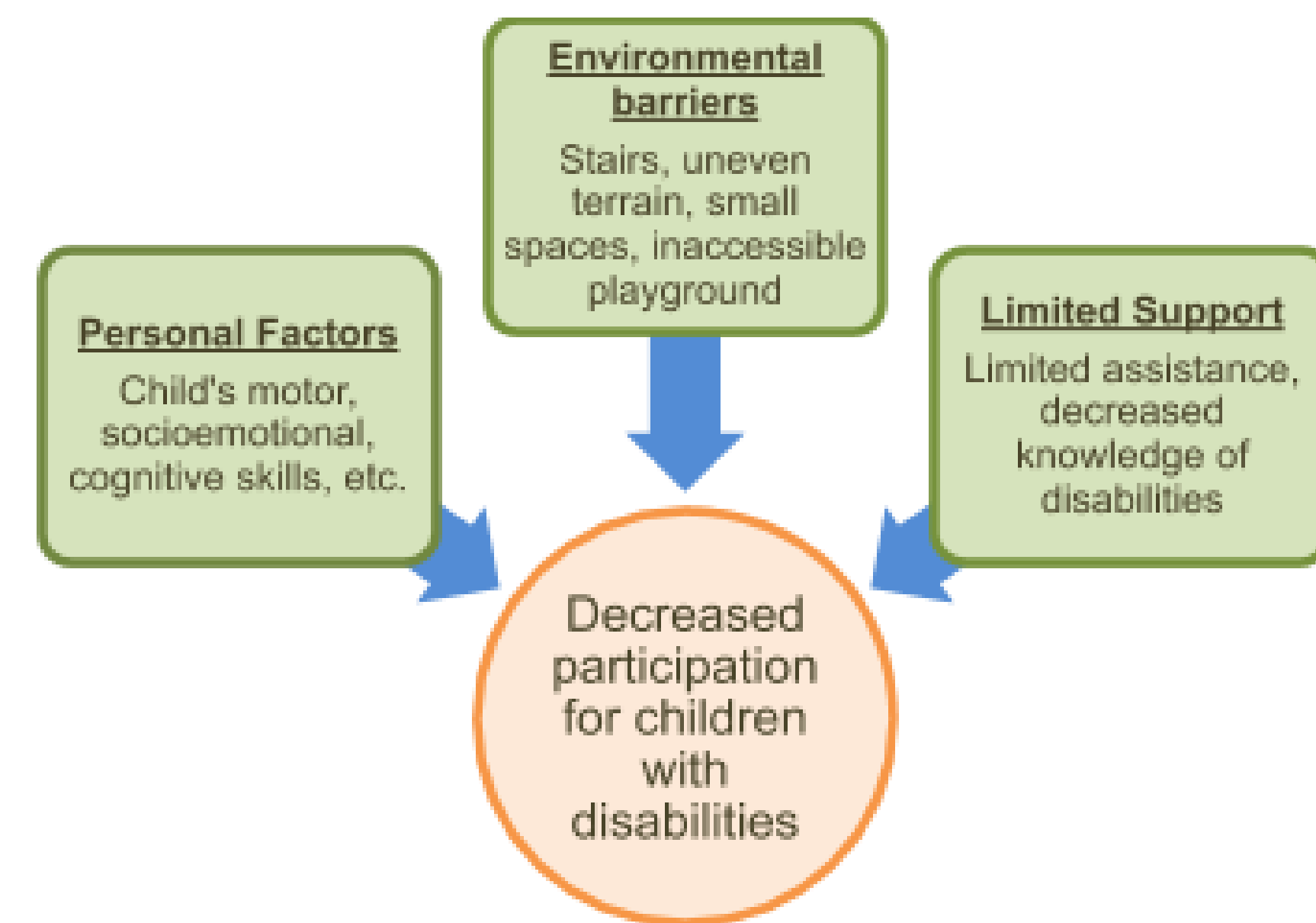
- Inclusion and social participation highly valued by children and their families/caregivers
- Promoting play in all settings, especially recess

#### Importance of Recess

- Cognitive
  - Enhances academic learning
  - Provides opportunities for cognitive development, such as problem-solving, attention, memory, processing, creativity and flexibility
- Physical
  - Provides opportunities for motor development, such as fine motor, gross motor, bilateral coordination, and motor planning
  - Decreases health risks (diabetes, high blood pressure, etc.)
- Socioemotional
  - Appropriate social skills of sharing, cooperation, and coping
  - Develop positive social relationships through preferential play

#### Recess for children with disabilities

- Engage in school less than their peers in all aspects
  - Includes classroom, extracurriculars, unstructured activities
  - May be due to a variety of reasons including:



- CWD reported significantly higher levels of victimization and negative affect than children without disabilities
- Report more feelings of unbelongingness, loneliness, and isolation compared to their peers

### FOCUSED QUESTIONS

1. What are effective methods in improving inclusive play for children with disabilities?
2. What is the utilization of a program promoting inclusive play for children with disabilities?

### METHODS

- Gained extensive pediatric experience
  - Followed 14 week fieldwork plan with end goal of evaluating/planning interventions/implementing treatment plans for a full caseload (outpatient, home health, and early intervention), accurately documenting sessions on Compulink, and completing plan of cares as needed
- Researched play participation and inclusivity for children with disabilities
- Implemented clinical experience and research to create a program
- Evaluated utilization with feedback from therapists, teachers, and parents.

### RESULTS



Aims to educate, guide, and support adults in promoting inclusive play for children

Research shows the only significant predictor of child engagement in recess was **adult engagement** (not safety and structure, student behaviors, transitions, or socioeconomic status)

Includes effective support strategies, examples of structured activities, and helpful resources

#### Utility

- Provides useful knowledge for individuals who have no worked with children with disabilities
- Not only helpful for elementary school but also junior high students

#### Feedback

- Include information on physical and cognitive disabilities and how children can engage peers within unstructured activities

### BOTTOM LINE FOR OT

Occupational therapists aim to improve participation of meaningful activities for children with disabilities by addressing cognitive, motor, and social skills. The objective of this project is to address these skills through inclusive play in order to increase motivation and satisfaction of children with disabilities.

#### Further Research and Program Development

- Recommend further research on methods of improving play
- Refine program to improve utilization

#### Education

- Educate community on general knowledge of disabilities and ways to support social participation
- Educate staff or friends on more effective methods to include children

#### Advocacy

- Majority of families face unfair treatment based on their child's abilities
- Advocate for them, the importance of inclusive play, the benefits of recess, and strategies that work best for their children
- Duty and code as occupational therapists

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