

ACCESS AT ELEVATION: STRATEGIES USED TO SUPPORT PARTICIPATION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN ADAPTIVE SNOWSPORTS

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Research Purpose

To improve our understanding of how to support participation in winter physical activity of people with disabilities, and especially in adaptive snowsports, this study aimed to explore the strategies used by several recreational adaptive snowsports organizations as perceived by their leadership.

Research Design and Methods

Design: Constructivist qualitative approach providing an exploratory lens of the perspectives and experiences of program leaders.

Methods and sample: Semi-structured one-on-one interviews with organization leaders (n=11) from a Canadian nonprofit, community-based sports organization that supports and promotes adaptive snowsports for participants of all ages with various types of disabilities

Analytic framework: Inductive thematic analysis

Resulting Themes

Inclusion: Carving a Run for Everyone

Organizations sought to support participants' **individual needs** and address **access barriers** such as socioeconomic limitations and physical accessibility.

It Takes a Village

Organizations relied on **resources from their communities**, including host ski resorts and volunteer instructors, to support participation of people with disabilities in adaptive snowsports.

A Mountain Range of Organization Operations

The organizations used different operational strategies to ensure they had the **human resource capacity and infrastructure** to run effectively. Strategies related to volunteer management, marketing and communication, and adaptive equipment.

Implications & Future Research

When considering how to improve the experiences of people with disabilities, it is important to recognize that **full participation extends to all aspects of the sport experience** and not just the moments when participants are on the mountain.

Access to entities which help create standards across the adaptive snowsports industry and provide access to resources and information is essential for smaller adaptive snowsports organizations that typically have access to fewer resources, such as funding, equipment, and volunteers

Creating inclusive spaces for all would benefit both the community and the individuals with disabilities.

Future research might consider exploring adaptive snowsports from the **perspective of host ski resorts or the volunteers** working in organizations to gain a better understanding of the considerations and perspectives of the key stakeholders who directly impact how adaptive snowsports organizations support participation.