Children with physical disabilities are more likely to report lower levels of physical activity than their peers with our physical disabilities\(^1\). Typically, children and youth with disabilities engage in very little school-based physical activity and less after-school programs that promote leading a physically active lifestyle\(^2\). This pattern of physical inactivity contributes to higher levels of obesity and other health problems in this population.

Federal Law requires states and schools to provide equal opportunity for children with physical disabilities to participate in physical education classes and after-school athletic programs. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act are federal civil rights laws that prohibit disability discrimination. Yet, despite these laws barriers to physical activity still exist for children with physical disabilities.

The U.S. Department of Education recommends the following tips for promoting the inclusion of children with physical disabilities in physical education classes and after-school athletic programs:

- Incorporating adapted Physical Education practices and universal design principles, including considerations of the area where physical activity takes place and specifications for particular disabilities, facilitate access to physical activity opportunities.
- Using appropriate equipment can help children with disabilities participate in physical activities. Some examples include treadmills and gaming systems that support motion detection technologies.
- Increasing personal knowledge on adaptive recreation techniques. Appropriate personnel preparation to adapt games and activities supports an inclusive environment and increases opportunities for physical activity for children with disabilities.
- Incorporating an inclusive teaching style creates a climate and culture of participation for children with and without disabilities.
- Promoting effective behavior management skills in teachers and coaches. Children with physical disabilities are more likely to fully participate in physical education classes and athletic programs when social, emotional, and behavioral interactions are directly instructed, monitored and remediated.
- Applying the universal design for learning framework to physical education curriculum increases opportunities for participation by providing multiple means for student engagement.
- Following assessment protocols that compare the individual against herself or himself are able to measure attainment and growth that are accurate and fair to children with disabilities. Many standardized benchmarks for health and fitness are inappropriate for children with physical disabilities.