

Making values actionable: Using Principles-Focused Evaluation to implement an ecological model of community-focused therapeutic recreation for children and youth with disabilities

Introduction

Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital (HBKRH) in Toronto, Canada, is known for its accessible, inclusive, and engaging recreation programs for children and youth with physical disabilities and other special needs (Table 1).

The ecological model of community-focused therapeutic recreation for children and youth with disabilities¹ is a four-part process model that outlines collaboration between service providers and community members to deliver accessible programs (Table 1) that increase empowerment, community participation, and social inclusion for this population. This is a process model and as such, tells us what we need to do, not how to do it. To be able to action this model, additional methods are needed.

Principles-Focused Evaluation (P-FE)

P-FE² emerged from the Developmental Evaluation tradition, giving evaluators the opportunity to make the often-intangible values of an organization or project known through actionable and evaluable statements called principles. These principles inform choices and tell us how to act. Therefore, we can see if our values are clear, meaningful, and actionable in other contexts; are actually being followed (accountability); and if they are leading to our desired results. This type of evaluation can support implementing the ecological model in practice.

Ecological model of community-focused therapeutic recreation and life skills

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Accessible recreation programs for children and youth with disabilities

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Principles-Focused Evaluation

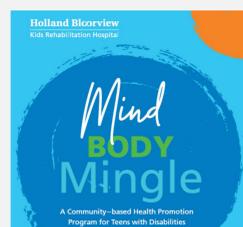
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Increased capacity for community partners to implement meaningful and accessible recreation programs, in a way that makes sense for their context, improving the social inclusion for this population

Table 1: Recreation Programs for External Implementation



artsXpress+ is a high-quality, accessible arts programs led by professional artists and musicians.



Mind Body Mingle is a community-based, recreational group program about wellness for high school students with disabilities.



Robotics teaches children and youth with disabilities about STEM based concepts, and how to apply them to make robots move.

Table 2: Example of the Four Elements of a Principle

Principle	Flexible, Adaptable, Individualized
Principle Defined	All staff know that each child/youth is unique and programming is built based on that knowledge.
Operationalizing Statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete intake/screening to assess participant individualized needs Individual participant needs are pro-actively factored into planning prior to start of program Programs are created to be flexible and adaptable; to be able to change as participant needs change (within minutes, within the session, across the program etc.)
Minimum Specifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Screening must occur prior to program to gather participant information and needs All abilities are recognized and planned for; programs are fully integrated and registration priority is given to any participant who has a disability, especially those who cannot be successfully integrated into a community recreation program.

What did we do?

Developed Principles through a design workshop series:

- 4 sessions
- Appreciative inquiry methods
- Engaged Program Leads, managers, staff that ran the program internally and families previous participants
- Created 6 principles that encompass the overarching core values of Holland Bloorview and the recreation programs.
- These Principle are:
 1. Flexible, Adaptable, Individualized
 2. Safety
 3. Tone, Climate, and Inclusivity
 4. Agency
 5. Innovation
 6. Training

A note on Principles

Each principle contains four elements (Example in Table 2):

- The principle
- Definition of the principle
- Statements to further operationalize the principle
- Minimum specifications³

Created a community partner selection screening process:

- Using the Principles, we created a 3-step screening process to select community partners committed to our core values of accessible and meaningful recreation opportunities
- These processes include:
 1. Web intake checklist
 2. Phone interview
 3. Site visit

COVID & Implementation

Implementation of our partner screening process for program implementation has been paused due the COVID-19 pandemic.