What Does Community Involvement Look Like?

Communities accept and welcome people with physical, intellectual, and developmental disabilities.

Community involvement can meet the needs of all people.

Examples of community involvement:

- Accessible playgrounds with playscapes and swings for wheelchairs
- Children with and without disabilities and special health care needs learning together in the same class
- Unified sports where children with and without special health care needs play together

About Us

The CYSHCN Systems Development Group works to improve care for children and youth with special health care needs. We partner with community-based organizations to provide support for families of CYSHCN.

Maternal and Child Health
Department of State Health Services
P.O. Box 149347 MC-1922
Austin, TX 78714-9347
512-776-7373
Fax: 512-458-7658
Email: CSHCNSDG@dshs.texas.gov

Product ID: 4-2 10/2026

Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs

A GUIDE TO COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

dshs.texas.gov/mch/CSHCN.aspx

TEXAS Health and Human Services | Texas Department of State Health Services

Community involvement is the ongoing support of children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN) and their families to be accepted in all aspects of a community of their choosing without exclusion or judgement.

Community involvement gives people with disabilities equal access to opportunities for healthy living. [1]

[1]"Definition of Inclusion: NCHPAD - Building Inclusive Communities." National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability (NCHPAD).

Resources for Providers

National Center on Health, Physical Activity, and Disability (NCHPAD) provides inclusion resources for community organizations, health care providers, and more. Learn more at **nchpad.org**.

Institute on Community Integration provides resources and tools to increase community inclusion of people with disabilities. Learn more at **ici.umn.edu**.

National Inclusion Project provides trainings, tools, and inclusion support for community organizations. Learn more at **inclusionproject.org**.

Benefits of Community Involvement

Involvement helps children with special health care needs and their families:[2]

- Build friendships with children without special health care needs and their families.
- Realize that children with special health care needs and disabilities can succeed in regular classrooms and still get support services.
- Improve health and well-being.
- Develop a sense of belonging.

Involvement helps the community:[3]

- Create more diverse relationships.
- Teach individuals to value differences.
- Provide opportunities for everyone to contribute to the community.

[2]"The Importance of Community Integration for People with Disabilities." United Disabilities Services Foundation, 2021.
[3]"Module 5—Community Inclusion". Illinois Department of Human Services, 2023.

Promote Involvement in Your Community

Make sure your community provides:

- A welcoming and supportive environment
- Equal opportunity to use all services
- Accessible and reasonable accommodations
- Dignity, respect, and privacy
- People-first language in all settings
- Ongoing support for inclusion within the community

Respect Language Preferences

People have different preferences when referring to their disability. Some people prefer to use person-first language meaning that you refer to the person first and the disability second. Some people prefer to use identity-first language meaning that you refer to the disability first and the person second.

Resources for Parents and Families

Visit these sites to find inclusive programs, events, and sports near you:

- **Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN) Systems Development Group** (Includes adaptive and inclusive recreation program directory): **dshs.texas.gov/maternal-child-health/programs-activities-maternal-child-health/cshcn-systems-development-group/community-inclusion**
- **Texas Parent to Parent:** **txp2p.org/resources/resources**
- **Navigate Life Texas:** **navigatelifetexas.org/en/services-groups-events**
- **Special Olympics Texas:** **sotx.org**