



Maine-Niles Association of Special Recreation



# Inclusion Information Guide

for parents and guardians



# Who is M-NASR?

Maine-Niles Association of Special Recreation, M-NASR, offers recreation programming and services to individuals with disabilities living within its seven member districts: Des Plaines Park District, Golf Maine Park District, Morton Grove Park District, Niles Park District, Park Ridge Park District, Skokie Park District and the Village of Lincolnwood Parks and Recreation department.

M-NASR has been providing meaningful recreation opportunities for children, teens and adults with disabilities since 1972. In addition to working with member districts to provide inclusion services for their programs, M-NASR also offers many of its own recreation programs for individuals with disabilities including, but not limited to, competitive sports, exercise, cultural arts, general recreation, bowling, swimming, day camps and special events.

# What is Inclusion?

Inclusion provides opportunities for individuals with disabilities to participate alongside their non-disabled peers in recreation programs. M-NASR works cooperatively with park districts to provide training and education to staff, as well as resources and reasonable accommodations to include individuals with disabilities registered for recreational programs they offer.

M-NASR and your home park district are committed to providing a variety of recreation and leisure choices for individuals who have special needs. We believe that all individuals should be provided with leisure opportunities that allow for performance at their highest level of ability.

Inclusion requires a collaborative effort between parents, the Program Inclusion Assistant, the park district program staff and M-NASR staff working together throughout the program to provide a successful inclusive experience.



# Inclusion encompasses 4 Cs: Collaboration, Confidence, Character and Connection



When M-NASR and park districts work together, families and participants benefit in many ways:

**Collaboration.** Working closely with park district providers to help in successful recreational experiences.

**Confidence.** Increasing participant confidence and self-esteem while engaging in recreational programs with peers.

**Character.** Building participant character traits based on strengths, including developing positive decision-making skills, emotional control, positive peer communication and active participation in the park district programs.

**Connection.** Connecting with peers and staff while creating a culture where people with and without disabilities can build meaningful relationships and participate in meaningful experiences.





# Program Inclusion Assistants

The goal when placing a Program Inclusion Assistant into a recreational program is to provide additional assistance so the park district can provide the most successful program in the least restrictive environment. Program Inclusion Assistants should blend into the program working in a 1:1, 1:2 and sometimes in a 1:3 ratio depending on the program and the needs of participants.

Program Inclusion Assistants are trained to provide support as needed to help the park district include the child in their program. This includes training in adapting activities, behavior management, disability awareness, incorporating visual schedules, timers and other tools as necessary. Program Inclusion Assistants are provided with the inclusion plan, along with the participant assessment prior to the start of the program. Program Inclusion Assistants follow the guidelines and expectations of all program staff at the program.

Program Inclusion Assistants are supervised on-site by the supervisor/leader of the park district program. They work closely with all program staff to ensure transitions, schedule changes and participant needs are being communicated to the necessary staff.

## Program Inclusion Assistant Support

Minimum Support	Provides the participant with a staff member staying near and keeping a close eye on all interactions. This would allow for the participant to play independently with peers, with staff only intervening when necessary. Minimum support could be provided by member district program staff or Program Inclusion Assistants who may also be working with other individuals.
Intermediate Support	Provides continuous verbal and visual cueing. Inclusion Program Inclusion Assistants could provide additional support for peer interaction and play, as well as model and encourage appropriate communication and behavior. Program Inclusion Assistants could continue to work with the individual participant throughout the entirety of the program to help them be included in the recreational program.
Maximum Support	Provides highly attentive directing and modeling for the participant during the entire program. Program Inclusion Assistants could provide additional routine and structure for these individuals, as well as incorporate behavior management techniques as needed. Program Inclusion Assistants could work with individuals with various means of communication including picture schedules, visuals and reward charts, as well as encouraging peer interaction and play.

# Set Up for Success

When a recreational program is designed for an inclusive experience, the benefits are endless for all individuals participating and could include:

- More positive recreational experiences, which contribute to the overall growth and development of every individual
- Social, physical, educational and cultural development, which can include sports, outdoor living, arts and all the major leisure interests of people
- Development of friendships in the communities where participants live, fostering a sense of belonging for the supported individual and family
- Increase in awareness of disabled individuals as a person first
- Shift in focus from what disabled individuals cannot do to what they can do
- Increased respect for, and value of, individual differences
- Greater variety of recreational choices for disabled individuals within their communities
- Increased comfort level with people who are different from themselves among the community
- More opportunities to develop individual strengths and increase self-esteem

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Who is eligible for Inclusion Services from M-NASR?

Individuals must be registered for a member park district program and have a disability or be in the process of being evaluated and/or tested.

### How far in advance do I need to request Inclusion services?

Advance planning and preparation help to increase the likelihood of success. M-NASR requests a minimum of two weeks advance notice to arrange accommodations.

### What is the cost?

Inclusion services provided by M-NASR are at no additional cost (other than the cost of the program), to the family or participant when registering in one of member park district programs.

### Who is the main contact?

It is important that the communication between the park district, families and M-NASR continues throughout the entire length of the program. Changes to schedule, staffing, medical or personnel changes and additional concerns need to be communicated to each party. Please refer to our "Who to Contact" form to answer any further questions.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## **What services can be provided?**

M-NASR provides training and education to park district staff and Program Inclusion Assistants including disability awareness, adaptations, visual schedules, transitions and behavior management, as well as tips and tricks for specific individual's needs. In addition, Program Inclusion Assistants could be added to the program.

## **What are the participant expectations?**

Participants are expected to adhere to the code of conduct provided by the park district. The modifications/accommodations provided may assist them in meeting those rules but does not exempt them from following them.

## **What happens once the inclusion accommodation is made?**

Once it has been determined what accommodations will be necessary the parents/guardian will be notified by M-NASR. Program visits and check-ins will continue throughout the program. If a change or a concern arises at any time, M-NASR is available to re-evaluate the inclusion plan in place.

## **What are the Program Inclusion Assistant qualifications?**

Program Inclusion Assistants must be 16 years or older and may or may not have experience or background working with individuals with disabilities. Program Assistants are trained to provide support as needed to help the park district include the child in their program. This includes training in adapting activities, and behavior management, disability awareness, incorporating visual schedules, timers and other tools as necessary.

## **Does a program request always guarantee a Program Inclusion Assistant will be provided?**

No. M-NASR will work closely with our park districts to determine if the need for additional staff is needed. Besides the individual needs being taken into consideration, decisions are based on class size and staff ratio, park district staff experience and knowledge of individuals and experience working with that specific disability. The goal of all inclusion plans is to provide a successful experience in the least restrictive environment.

## **What if the Program Inclusion Assistant is sick or unable to attend the program?**

Program Inclusion Assistants are trained during orientation to provide two weeks notice prior to any time off. During that two-week period, M-NASR staff will find alternative assistance. In the event the staff is absent due to illness, M-NASR will try to find alternative staff for the day of the program; however, if a substitute cannot be secured, the park district staff will provide the necessary assistance.

# Who to Call

Concern	M-NASR	Park District	Additional Information
Absence		X	We highly encourage parents to notify us of absences so we can adjust staffing as needed.
Program enrollment changes		X	If you have adjusted the schedule of attendance for your child, please report it to M-NASR and the park district. We want to make sure all accommodations will be incorporated into the new schedule.
Program activity concerns		X	M-NASR Program Inclusion Assistants are there to assist your child in the activities the park district has planned. Program activities or concerns should be addressed with the park district staff and communication should be with the supervisor.
Program Inclusion Assistant concerns	X		Please know it can take up to two weeks for staff and participants to foster a relationship. However, we realize that not all pairings are a good fit. Once we know the concerns, we will look at solutions and be sure to make the necessary changes or address the concern immediately.
Your child's needs have changed	X		Any changes in medication, behavioral plan, therapy services, etc. should be shared with the park district and M-NASR. We will work closely with your child and Program Inclusion Assistant to adjust the current inclusion plan.

Contact the M-NASR Inclusion Team at 847-966-5522

