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Therapeutic recreation camps such as Camp New Hope can positively impact social support through peer bonding. A research study conducted by the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center states there is "evidence suggesting short-term psychosocial benefits of camps for children with chronic diseases," which include "improvements in social interactions, acceptance, self-perception, and autonomy" (Saez et al., 2022). Although this study only measured the benefits of camps for children with chronic illnesses, such as diabetes or cancer, those with intellectual or developmental disabilities may also benefit from therapeutic camps. Those with intellectual or developmental disabilities are also more likely to have chronic disorders, making therapeutic recreation camps an excellent intervention to provide social connectedness through shared experiences among participants. At Camp New Hope, participants played games in a judgment-free environment with peers who understood each other's difficulties. Furthermore, therapeutic recreation camps also provide an outlet for physical activity.

Obesity has become a growing epidemic and includes all demographics, although this is a more significant issue among those with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Catherine Sanner, a Ph.D. student from the Department of Psychology in California, states that "individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities are particularly vulnerable to obesity due to additional factors" (Sanner et al., 2021). These additional factors are "physical limitations, medications with effects on appetite, sensory problems affecting nutritional choices, and increased behavior problems placated with food" (Sanner et al., 2021). Recreational camps such as those run by Camp New Hope provide many physical activities for camp participants, including bounce houses, swimming, and even a 5K run. For those with physical limitations, all

activities for every level are available to get participants active and socializing, including cornhole, the cake run, and the bubble station. Sanner also writes, "social communication deficits with intellectual disabilities and developmental disabilities pose as additional barriers to physical activity and likely have a negative impact on involvement in sports and other physical activities" (Sanner et al., 2021). At a therapeutic camp such as Camp New Hope, those with intellectual and developmental disabilities can feel comfortable trying new games with peers and come home with a positive active experience that can increase their confidence.

### References

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- Sanner, C. M., Neece, C. L., Herbozo, S., & Baum, M. F. (2021). A pilot study of enhanced operation fit: The feasibility of a camp-based health intervention for ethnically diverse families of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities : JARID*, 34(2), 624–633. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jar.12832>