

Therapeutic Recreation And Inclusive Networks (TRAIN)
CFDA 84.325: Combined Priority for Personnel Preparation
Abstract

The North Carolina Board of Recreational Therapy Licensure states that enrollment of students in programs preparing future Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialists (CTRS) is steadily declining, and reflects a national trend. Yet, the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* predicts the need for community-based therapeutic recreation specialists will grow by 18% to 26% by 2014. Furthermore, without the leadership of CTRSs, recreation agencies have had little success in designing effective inclusive community recreation and physical activity for children, youth, and young adults with significant disabilities, especially those of transition-age (14-26 years). Lack of access to community recreation has led to significant health issues for individuals with disabilities. In addition to the significant health benefits through participation in community recreation, it has been found that youth with disabilities supported in inclusive environments experience improved quality of life and transition into adult life with increased independence and employment stability.

Research on best practices in inclusive community recreation currently being conducted in the Department of Recreation, Tourism, and Hospitality Management at UNCG puts this research and training team in a strategic position to meet the growing demand for therapeutic recreation professionals prepared with state-of-the-art, research-based best practices in inclusive community recreation and physical activity. With funding support from the U.S. Department of Education, 8 graduate and 25 undergraduate level students will receive extensive preservice and experiential training to become Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialists with expertise in meeting the need for inclusive community recreation and physical activity for transition-age youth with developmental disabilities. Sixty percent of total annual funding is designated to support these student trainees through assistantships and tuition waivers. Vital to the training intervention is the research currently being conducted by project staff that will provide students with access to state-of-the-art best practices, extensive experiential training in exemplary agencies across the U.S., and opportunities to work within a local residential/college campus transition and community inclusion program serving transition-age youth with developmental disabilities. The following five goals will be met through TRAIN:

- Goal 1: Graduate (8) and undergraduate (25) student trainees will complete core therapeutic recreation curriculum requirements and be prepared for and obtain the credential of Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist.
- Goal 2: Student trainees will be trained in research-based therapeutic recreation services and best practices that result in improved outcomes for transition-age youth with significant disabilities in inclusive community recreation and physical activity.
- Goal 3: Student trainees will apply education and gain experience in the use of research-based therapeutic recreation services and best practices that result in improved outcomes for transition-age youth (14-26 years) with developmental disabilities within exemplary agencies.
- Goal 4: Student trainees will be prepared to address the specialized needs of children, youth, and young adults with disabilities from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- Goal 5: The Department of Recreation, Tourism, and Hospitality Management (UNCG) will complete a network of exemplary agencies and practitioners across the U.S. and the coursework necessary to continue preparing students to serve transition-age youth with developmental disabilities in inclusive community recreation and physical activity settings.