

# Evidence to Support Environmental and Contextual Modifications to Improve Participation in Community Events for Children with Disabilities

Alexis Howell, OTS, Ryan James, OTS, Teri Priest, OTS, Emily Sandy, OTS, Meghan Williams, OTS,  
Pamalyn Kearney, EdD, OTR/L, Mallory Rosche, MHS, OTR/L  
Augusta University Occupational Therapy, Augusta, Georgia

## INTRODUCTION

- Current literature has shown that children with disabilities participate less often and are not as engaged when participating compared to children without disabilities<sup>1,2,3</sup>.
- This lack of participation might occur due to the interaction between environmental, attitudinal, and social barriers at home, at work, and during play<sup>4</sup>.
- Participation allows children to learn about societal expectations, appropriate communication with others, develop friendships and skills they need to become successful at home, in communities, and in life<sup>5</sup>.
- Participation is regarded as an essential aspect of child health and well-being<sup>5</sup>.
- This study aims to determine what evidence is available to support modifications to environments and contexts to improve participation in community events for children with disabilities under the age of 18.

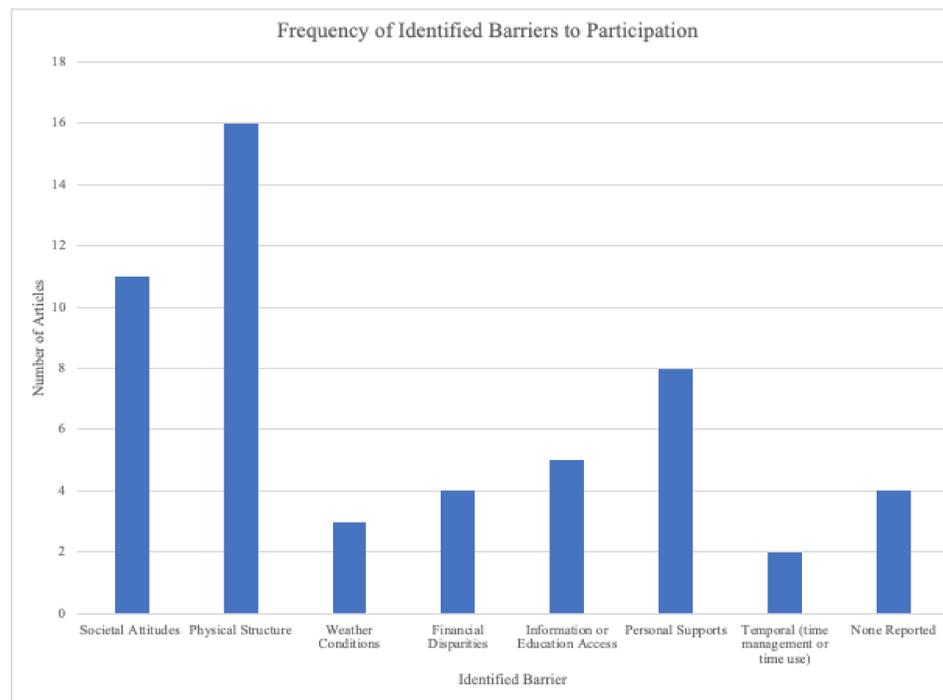
## METHODS

- A scoping review was conducted between 2012 and 2020 using Arksey & O'Malley's protocol<sup>6</sup>.
- Search strategies were conducted across PubMed, CINAHL, and EBSCOhost (last search date: February 17, 2021).
- Inclusion: Any mental, physical, developmental disability, community based setting, or dealing with social participation in the school setting.
- Exclusion: Not written in English, > 50% of participants over 18 years old, modifications made in the school environment strictly for academics.
- Initial review: Title and abstract.
- Second review: Full-text.
- Results: Discussed to ensure agreeability and increased interrater reliability.
- Disagreements: Brought to the larger group to establish a consensus.

## RESULTS

Themes from the article analyses are listed below.

- Knowledge acquisition was through database searches.
- 26 articles were included in the study.
- Studies: 14 descriptive, 5 correlational, 7 experimental.
- Only 3 articles discussed the use of an intervention which is the Pathways and Resources for Engagement and Participation (PREP) further discussed in the conclusion



Merriam. June 7, 2021. <https://www.merriam.org/News/2021/We-Go-Swing-Installed-at-Chatlain-Park>

## CONCLUSIONS

- This study fills the gap in literature by providing evidence of environmental modifications that promote participation for children with disabilities.
- Impact: Promoting participation could enhance quality of life and facilitate leisure occupations for this population<sup>2</sup>.
- Although there is a lack of evidence on specific interventions for increasing participation, there is evidence demonstrating the need for interventions.
- There is evidence to support contextual modifications (such as attitudes of others external to the family unit) as part of OT interventions.
- Identified Intervention: The Pathways and Resources for Engagement and Participation (PREP) which utilizes a strengths-based approach to enhance participation by modifying the environment<sup>7</sup>.

## CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS

Practitioners and educators should consider:

- Developing interventions that address the physical environment of the community setting
- Providing resources to parents that address the physical environment of the community setting

Researchers should consider:

- Completing a systematic review of intervention studies for community participation
- Conducting further research on this topic

## REFERENCES

See handout for references.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank Lachelle C. Smith, M.Ed, MSLIS, for her contribution to refining our search strategies. We would also like to thank the Department of Occupational Therapy at Augusta University.



**Poster Title**

Author Names

Augusta University Pharmacy, Augusta, Georgia