

# OPERATING TIPS

The following suggestions have been provided by leading disability sport organizations as well as experienced adaptive lacrosse coaches and program leaders:

## Program Structure

- Strive to have at least one (1) coach for every four (4) athletes in a session.
- Recognize that some athletes may require one-on-one support while others will not.
- Utilize teammates or partners to help assist athletes and provide support when needed.
- Consider organizing stations based on age and/or skill level.
- Allow athletes to self-select their level of participation with some guidance.
- Modify activities as needed, with the understanding that some athletes may require different modifications than others to participate in the same activity.

## Communication

- Be proactive and ask open-ended questions during your registration process, such as:
  - What accommodations does the athlete need to participate?
  - Is there anything important that you would like us to know about the athlete?
- Publish flyers and other materials which clearly welcome athletes with disabilities.
- Provide clear directions about your program to parents and caregivers, including what to wear, what to bring, and what to expect.
- Create opportunities for interaction between athletes before, during, and after sessions.
- Recognize specific athletes for achievement, sportsmanship, or leadership.
- Offer a variety of ways for participants to ask questions and provide feedback.

## Terminology

- Use language that portrays people with disabilities in a respectful and balanced way.
- Emphasize abilities rather than limitations. For example, using the phrase “athlete who uses a wheelchair” is generally more appropriate, empowering, and accurate than using phrases like “wheelchair-bound” or “confined to a wheelchair”.
- Avoid using offensive language, condescending euphemisms, or overly emotional terms such as “suffering” or “afflicted” which may perpetuate negative stereotypes.
- See here for more helpful tips: [Guidelines for Writing About People With Disabilities](#)

## Scheduling

- Establish a consistent routine with practices scheduled at the same time each week.
- Provide frequent water breaks, rest periods, and feedback opportunities.

## Physical Space

- Examine the accessibility of the facility, playing surface, and restrooms.
- Consider how athletes will travel to and enter the site.
- Mark positions on the field where specific stations or activities will take place.
- Ensure all athletes are aware of any boundaries or safety concerns.
- Consider hosting sessions indoors to reduce distractions which may cause anxiety.

## Sensory Space

- Let athletes know ahead of time when loud noises may be expected.
- Use headphones to filter out extraneous sound.
- Provide breaks from noise, light, or other sensory triggers.
- Allow athletes to take breaks if the stimulation of the group is too intense.
- Reduce harsh fluorescent lighting, loud fans, scoreboards, and buzzers.

## Equipment

- Experiment with different colors, textures, and types of equipment.
- Utilize any type of lacrosse stick that helps create success for the athlete, including a men's lacrosse stick, women's lacrosse stick, soft stick, or fiddle stick.
- Add grip tape to the stick to help athletes learn where to place their hands. Some athletes may be engaged by bright colors or unique textures.
- Use a soft foam practice ball or tennis ball when not wearing protective equipment.

## Transitions

- Make a visual schedule with pictures or icons to indicate what is coming next.
- Waiting in line may be difficult for some athletes. Consider using group activities that engage everyone and minimize lines and lectures.
- Use a transition countdown to indicate when it is time to transition from one activity to another. Use gestures or pictures for children who need more than just speech.
- Allow many opportunities for repetition and practice.