

HKIN 367 Major Paper

Richmond Centre for Disability

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Introduction: Organizational Delivery of Activities and Location

The Richmond Centre for Disability (RCD) is a non-profit organization and charitable society that provides support and services for persons with a disability (PWD) (Richmond Centre for Disability [RCD], 2010a). As an accredited member of Independent Living (IL) Canada, it differs from traditional service-providing organizations by emphasizing peer support, self-direction, and community integration by and for PWD themselves (RCD, 2010a). RCD delivers many activities to PWD under three broad categories of Information and Networking Services, Skills Development and Empowerment, and Peer Support and Recreation (RCD, 2010c). Specific programs include computer training, English class, singing group, knitting club, table tennis club, and others (RCD, 2010c). These programs provide a wide range of different leisure opportunities for PWD, and this is important to note because leisure is a state of mind which is defined by the individual in relation to choice, pleasure, time, and cultural influence (Samuhel-Corewyn, 2010). The address of RCD is 100 - 5671 No. 3 Rd, which is located at the north-west corner of the intersection at No. 3 Road and Lansdowne Road in downtown Richmond (RCD, 2010d). This is a very convenient and accessible location because it is in close proximity to Lansdowne Mall and the Canada Line Lansdowne skytrain station (RCD, 2010d).

History of Richmond Centre for Disability for Persons with Disabilities

In 1985, RCD was established through the joint effort of United Way of the Lower Mainland, the Special Needs and Social Planning departments of the City of Richmond, and a number of PWD from the community (RCD, 2010b). This organization was created because of an identified need for specialized information and resources for PWD in Richmond, and RCD has focused on providing the services that were needed but not available (RCD, 2010b). Key accomplishments in the history of RCD include working with the City of Richmond to develop accessibility requirements for city buildings and a sidewalk curb cut design to address the needs of both wheelchair users and the visually impaired (RCD, 2010b). They have also worked closely with community developers to provide input relating to accessibility for commercial and residential developments in order to create more user-friendly projects (RCD, 2010b). Finally, RCD was a facilitator and partner in the 1995 establishment of the Richmond Therapeutic Equestrian Society (RCD, 2010b).

Mission and Visions of Richmond Centre for Disability

The mission of RCD is “to empower PWD to participate in the community to the level of their desires and abilities by providing information, resources, support and by increasing community awareness and accessibility” (RCD, 2010a). RCD has three visions: to improve the independence and quality of life of PWD in the community, to act as a voice for PWD in Richmond, and to undertake projects, such as an information and resource centre, programs or services as may be required to achieve the charitable purposes of the Society (RCD, 2010a). The goal of RCD is that PWD will be empowered to take responsibility for their own lives and to participate in community to the full level of their ability (RCD, 2010a). Whereas equality focuses on the same allocation of resources and opportunities, RCD clearly supports the notion of equity for PWD, where the goal is for fair and appropriate allocation of resources to enable all to succeed (Samuhel-Corewyn, 2010). The organization focuses on providing and advocating for accommodations for inclusion, so that PWD may be normalized into society. This is in alignment with their IL philosophy for individuals, which focuses on building the skills and capacities that are necessary to lead a healthy and participatory life within their communities (RCD, 2010a).

Target Group of Richmond Centre for Disability

The RCD is a grassroots organization run by PWD to provide direct services for PWD (RCD, 2010a). This is an example of integration because PWD are included in the planning and decision-making, with interactions and interdependence occurring amongst community members (Samuhel-Corewyn, 2010). In 2009, RCD served over 17,000 people with disabilities, provided nearly 80,000 service hours and offered over 1,200 skills training classes and close to 100 recreational activities (RCD, 2010f). RCD is cross-disability, serving persons with any types of disabilities; this includes people with physical disabilities, cognitive disabilities, sensory disabilities, chronic health conditions and psychiatric illness (E. Huang, personal communication, November 21, 2010). Therefore, the organization's target group is PWD, regardless of age or type of disability. Families, caregivers, and support networks related to the PWD are also included in the scope of service provision and benefit from support and services (RCD, 2010a). RCD programs focus primarily on adaptation, with a prescribed outcome of building skills for independent community living (RCD, 2010c). As such, RCD caters more effectively to PWD needing relatively less accommodation and leaning toward full ability of the ability continuum (J. Samuhel-Corewyn, personal communication, September 9, 2010).

How does Richmond Centre for Disability provide Leisure Opportunities for PWD?

RCD offers an empowering environment where leisure opportunities are provided to PWD. In terms of program format, most programs are free of charge on a drop-in basis specified for one day of the week and are on-site at RCD (RCD, 2010c). For example, Table Tennis Club is a free program which takes place every Thursday at the Centre (RCD, 2010c). All essential equipment for the activity is provided by RCD, but clients are welcome to bring their own (RCD, 2010c). Social Group and Singing Club are examples of some leisure activities which do not require instruction; however, other programs have instructors that are either RCD staff or brought in from the community (RCD, 2010c). A few programs cost money, such as Tai Chi Club, which is \$5 for a one-month pass (RCD, 2010c). It should be noted that some programs are offered in either English or Chinese, which reflects the common languages spoken in Richmond, and thus being able to reach out to more people in need (RCD, 2010c). In providing opportunities for PWD to engage in leisure activity, RCD promotes integration through encouraging social interaction and helping to build friendship amongst participants (Samuhel-Corewyn, 2010). However, as the programs are mostly on-site at RCD, the PWD are still segregated from the greater community and universal design programs (Samuhel-Corewyn, 2010).

Leisure Programs offered at Richmond Centre for Disability

In providing leisure programs, included with it is the important opportunity for socialization, which is having the chance to be involved and belong, feeling that you are part of something, and the sharing of experiences (Samuhel-Corewyn, 2010). When clients participate and interact with other PWD in programs, they are integrated within the organization and interdependence occurs (Samuhel-Corewyn, 2010). One of the strengths of RCD is that due to the large number of programs available, participants can come on every weekday for a different leisure activity. On Monday, there is Creative Arts Club, Knitting Club and Guitar Class (RCD, 2010c). Strategy and Skills Games Club and Life Skills Training are offered on Tuesday (RCD, 2010c). On Wednesday, there is Craftworks Club and Martial Arts and Self-Defense Course (RCD, 2010c). Thursdays consist of Singing Club, Table Tennis Club, and Social Group (RCD, 2010c). Finally, Friday offers Tai Chi Club and Yoga Class (RCD, 2010c). In addition, there is also Chinese Support Group, Youth Support Group, and Peer Empowerment Group which meet once per month (RCD, 2010c). The significant number of leisure activities allow participants to self select meaningful opportunities based on their own needs and interests to reach functional

objectives (Samuhel-Corewyn, 2010). These integrated programs are offered in a non-traditional setting at RCD and were created to fit the needs of PWD participants (RCD, 2010a; Samuhel-Corewyn, 2010). The activities are adapted, which gives support to the individual to meet the learning outcomes of the prescribed curriculum (Samuhel-Corewyn, 2010). The ultimate goal is to help PWD build the skills that are necessary for full inclusion with the greater community and to lead a healthy and participatory life (RCD, 2010c).

In-depth Examination of Martial Arts and Self-Defense Course

One extraordinary leisure program that is offered to PWD is the Martial Arts and Self-Defense Course (RCD, 2010c). This program is a unique community partnership between RCD and Sirota's Alchemy Martial Arts Centre (RCD, 2010c). Sirota's Alchemy is affiliated and certified by several martial arts organizations promoting programs for people with special needs and disabilities, including the International Disabled Self-Defense Association and the World Taekwondo Federation for the Disabled (Sirota's Alchemy [SA], 2010). Sirota's Alchemy has pioneered the creation and implementation of Martial Arts and Self-Defense programs for PWD (SA, 2010). A certified instructor from the Sirota's Alchemy is brought in to teach the course at RCD, which is an example of integration because the activity is provided in a non-traditional setting as it would normally be offered at their Martial Arts Centre (RCD, 2010c; Samuhel-Corewyn, 2010). PWD are accommodated through adaptation; support is provided to the individual to learn martial arts skills and techniques, with the same learning outcomes as the prescribed curriculum (Samuhel-Corewyn, 2010). This program is ongoing for most of the year, with each course comprised of 10 classes for \$80 (RCD, 2010c). The course, which combine people with cognitive, developmental, and mobility disabilities, takes place at 10:00-11:00 AM on Wednesdays (RCD, 2010c). The next upcoming course runs from January 12 to March 16, 2011 (RCD, 2010c). The benefits of this leisure activity include improved motor skills, dexterity, and coordination, as well as increased self-confidence and self-esteem (RCD, 2010c).

Recruitment of Participants into Leisure Programs

RCD recruits participants into their leisure programs in a variety of ways. The Centre's website (<http://www.rcdrichmond.org>), which currently registers an average of 100,000 page hits per month, is used to inform and recruit participants into their programs (RCD, 2010b). The website, services, and activities are in both English and Chinese, which reflects the relatively

common languages spoken in Richmond (RCD, 2010b). Communication services in other languages can also be provided (RCD, 2010b). RCD also publishes a RecCREATE Newsletter every other month to update and promote the recreation activities that are offered, which can be downloaded from the website, delivered through regular post, or sent by e-mail (RCD, 2010e). The Newsletter provides a complete schedule of activities and registration reminders (RCD, 2010e). Finally, an individual can pick up a brochure for a specific leisure activity at RCD, complete with dates, times, contact information, and other relevant details (see attached). These extensive recruiting methods minimize communication barriers in order to make the programs offered at RCD known, and thus accessible, to PWD in the community who may be in need and are interested.

Organizational Barriers in the Provision of Leisure Opportunities for PWD

A barrier is defined as “environmental, structural, systemic, social and personal realities that prevent PWD from participating in recreation, or make such participation difficult to achieve” (Samuhel-Corewyn, 2010). Within RCD, there are organizational barriers related to their provision of leisure opportunities for PWD. One context-related barrier, which externally arises from people and places, is that some instructors who are brought in from the wider community may be well-trained in their area of sport, but do not know how to interact or effectively teach PWD (Samuhel-Corewyn, 2010; T. Parker, personal communication, November 13, 2010). There are also economic barriers concerning the costs required to run programs because of tight budget issues related to the current economy (T. Parker, personal communication, November 13, 2010). Therefore, there are not as many programs as desired and limited space in existing programs so participants may not be able to get involved (T. Parker, personal communication, November 13, 2010). Although well advertised, a communication barrier for RCD is that it may be difficult to convince PWD and their family of program benefits, which affects the recruitment of participants (T. Parker, personal communication, November 13, 2010). Lastly, RCD has context-related barriers related to capacity and manpower issues, with the Centre currently overwhelmed by the activity schedule; possible solutions would include recruiting more volunteers and looking for community partnerships or off-site venues (E. Huang, personal communication, November 21, 2010).

Barriers Faced by PWD in the Provision of Leisure Opportunities

There may also be performance barriers related to PWD in the provision of leisure opportunities. A context-related barrier for PWD is that RCD offers relatively few to no modified programs and places the focus on reaching prescribed outcomes, but not on participants' special needs (Samuhel-Corewyn, 2010); RCD, 2010c). As such, task-related barriers would arise because some PWD are unable to participate in adapted programs and require modifications to reach different outcomes than that of the prescribed curriculum (Samuhel-Corewyn, 2010). Another context-related barrier for PWD is that RCD only offers one class per activity due to instructor and space availability (RCD, 2010c). This creates an associated task-related barrier associated with the activity, where the specific skill level of the program may be too difficult or too easy for some participants (T. Parker, personal communication, November 13, 2010). Unfortunately, this sometimes translates to person-related barriers, which includes loss of self-confidence and perceived skill in the individual participant (E. Huang, personal communication, November 21, 2010). Other person-related barriers for PWD would include unawareness of where to look for appropriate leisure opportunities and financial constraints for activity fees, equipment, and transportation (E. Huang, personal communication, November 21, 2010).

Funding Sources that RCD Accesses for Leisure Delivery

As a non-profit organization, RCD must be financially sustainable with secured corporate and government funding, revenue generating programs and proactive fund-raising efforts (RCD, 2010g). Their core funding is provided by Independent Living Canada, which is a national non-profit organization, and The City of Richmond (RCD, 2010g). They also receive funding from BC Gaming, Industry Canada, Coast Capital Savings, and the Government of Canada (RCD, 2010g). On their website, anyone can donate through CanadaHelps.org (RCD, 2010f). Currently, RCD is on a tight budget due to the current state of the economy (T. Parker, personal communication, November 13, 2010). However, the majority of their leisure opportunities and programs are free due to the nature of the sport being relatively inexpensive (RCD, 2010c). The sports offered at RCD of table tennis, tai chi, and yoga may be compared to expensive activities such as rock-climbing, skiing, and golf (RCD, 2010c). This may be an example of activity substitution, where the sports offered provide similar recreation experiences of improving self-confidence, learning, and socialization, but are financially feasible and sustainable for RCD (Samuhel-Corewyn, 2010).

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