Zoo Troop For All

“Working to create more inclusive programming in our communities for children with developmental disabilities and their families.”

Elizabeth Burnett, MASW, LSW, Courtney Goldsbury, PT, DPT, Teresa Smith, MA, Tyra Vason, Jennifer Smith, PsyD, BCBA-D

Background

- Nationally, there are few examples of ongoing zoo programs that fit the needs of children with developmental disabilities (DD).
- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provides guidelines for public facilities to address accessibility for individuals with disabilities, however there are no guidelines regarding inclusive programming, classes, or camps.
- The few zoos that do have inclusive programming often do not measure their outcomes in a meaningful way.
- Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden (CZBG), located adjacent to Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center (CHMC), has the largest membership of any cultural institution in the Cincinnati area (>58,000 households).
- In the surrounding areas, data indicate that 19.4% of Cincinnati Public School students receive services for a disability.¹
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that about 1 in 6 children in the United States have one or more developmental disabilities.²

Objectives

Zoo Troop for All (ZTFA) aims to involve more children with DD in programming at CZBG by:

- Creating training for staff to increase their confidence in working with and supporting children with DD
- Collaborating with families and staff to assess needs and effective ways to improve overall experiences at CZBG
- Implementing inclusive ZTFA classes for children with DD
- Evaluating outcomes from training and programming

Training

CZBG staff leaders from each department attended an eight-hour training session aimed to provide knowledge of DD and increase confidence in working with children with DD. Training included didactic and interactive components on a variety of topics that were applicable to the zoo setting.

Training Topics

- Disability Etiquette
- Introduction to Developmental Disabilities
- Communication Systems
- Behavior Management
- Visual Supports

Interactive Components

- Discussion Groups
- Group Presentations
- Developmental Disabilities Videos
- Caregiver Panel
- Interaction with Children with Developmental Disabilities

Measure Development

Three measures were created to assess outcomes of the ZTFA training and programming.

Pre-and Post- Training Zoo Troop Self-Efficacy Scale

- Measures self-efficacy regarding ZTFA class, including confidence to carry out program goals, work with children with DD, and use behavior management strategies
- 15-item scale completed by staff at beginning and end of training

Caregiver Satisfaction Questionnaire

- Gathers information on caregiver satisfaction of ZTFA programming for their child with DD
- 14-item survey completed by caregivers at end of program

Measure Development, cont.

Zoo Troop Student Engagement

- Captures information on student participation, attention, disruptive behavior, and engagement during ZTFA
- 4-item instrument completed by staff observers for every student in each class

Next Steps

- Train all ZTFA and CZBG staff according to department needs and evaluate outcomes
- Implement and evaluate inclusive ZTFA programming for children with DD

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our partners at the CZBG and the Lifelong Learning Group at the Center for Research and Evaluation, as well as the families who dedicated their time to participate in our project. This project is funded by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau Grant T73MC00032.

References