

tips for communities & society



Friendships: Building a Good Life



Friendship development is important to **COMMUNITIES & SOCIETY**

Friendship development helps to build the communities we want all of our children to experience. We want a world where all are accepted and, by virtue of their birth, are seen as part of the whole. We want a place where differences are embraced and understood—not just tolerated and accepted.

Friendship development for children with disabilities creates a future world where, as adults, their peers become their employers, support personnel, doctors, neighbors and friends. Children with disabilities become adults who are seen as equal participants in recreation and leisure activities and active community members with the support needed to navigate in their adult world.



People who grow up together and share experiences together become adults who are comfortable and welcoming when encountering diversity in their communities and work places. We all need to work to create a community and society that is welcoming for all. We want to live in a world that values the individual gifts of all.

The following 6 Elements of Friendship Development are based on a PATTAN Webinar Series (2013) by Erik Carter, Vanderbilt University, archived on the PATTAN website at <http://bit.ly/2lj1bb>.



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What Community & Society Can Do

ELEMENT 1: **Shared Activities** *(same activities, same time, same place)*

- Provide a range of activities across a variety of interests, skills and ages.
- Ensure that staff is aware of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the protections it provides for the participation of all community members in activities open to the general public.



- Seek input from representatives within the disability community when designing areas and activities for community participation.
- Members of community groups—and society in general—should examine their belief systems regarding the place of people with disabilities in society.

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What Community & Society Can Do

ELEMENT 2: **Shared Interests**



- Be aware that the interests of children with disabilities most likely mirror that of the general population.
- When planning activities, adhere to the principles of universal design, which ensures many ways to access the same activity.
- Understand that beliefs about people with disabilities should be examined. As a society we must presume that all people are capable of developing friendships (O'Brien & O'Brien, 1993).



What Community & Society Can Do

ELEMENT 3: Valued Roles for All

- Make sure the composition of boards, committees and panels is representative of the population as a whole, including those with disabilities.
- When questions arise about issues related to disability within the community, seek out answers from the “experts” — those living with disabilities themselves.
- Review the *10 Commandments of Etiquette for Communicating with People with Disabilities*, which were originally developed by the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy. The 10 Commandments can be found on a variety of disability-related websites, including ucp.org under Explore Resources > Disability Etiquette.
- Ensure that all employees, including those with disabilities, have opportunities to interact with all children in your community activities.
- Highlight the valued roles people with disabilities have in their communities.



What Community & Society Can Do

ELEMENT 4: Share Information about each Other



- Consult with adults with disabilities regarding recommended films that show disabilities in a positive light. Offer these films as part of the schedule of films for community nights.
- Ask families and disability advocates for recommendations of children’s books to be included in your local library. These books should represent children and people with disabilities as members of schools, communities and families.

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What Community & Society
Can Do

ELEMENT 5:
*Just Enough Support
from Adults*

- Be open to the participation of all children in the activities offered in your neighborhood or community.
- Brainstorm solutions to issues or questions of access or participation. Consult with organizations or parents of children with disabilities to find the answers.
- Change the dialogue! The question should never begin with “Why. . .” but instead “How can we. . .?”
- Resist the temptation to create “special activities” for “special people.” Rather, create opportunities for all people within the community to come together.

What Community & Society
Can Do

ELEMENT 6:
Reflection

- Ask your group or organization if you are adapting to the needs of all the children in your community. Are you asking children with disabilities to conform to your set policies or practices?
- Ask yourself if your policies and practices value all your citizens and create an atmosphere and culture of welcome



NOTES:

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