CREATING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

SUCCESS STORY

MODHP
Missouri Disability and Health Program

RECREATION FOR ALL: BUILDING ACCESSIBLE COMMUNITIES THROUGH STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

According to the 2025 Missouri Needs Assessment, one third of Missourians with an intellectual or developmental disability (IDD) or their family members reported having unmet recreation-related needs. To address this unmet need and improve access to recreational facilities, the Missouri Disability and Health Program (MODHP) partnered with the Missouri State Alliance of YMCAs (MOYMCA) and YMCA of Greater Kansas City to support Policy, Systems, and Environmental (PSE) changes at YMCA sites across Missouri. YMCAs are well-positioned to support healthy living, with facilities in over **70 diverse communities around the state**.

1 in 3

MISSOURIANS WITH IDD

or their family members

reported having

UNMET RECREATION RELATED NEEDS.

The PSE process involves four steps, including assessment, identification, implementation, and evaluation. This process is designed to provide introductory training on disability, identify gaps in accessibility, and implement targeted changes to address those gaps. Since 2022, MODHP and MOYMCA have engaged **11 YMCA facilities statewide**, including two regional associations. Each site received disability training and support using the Community Health Inclusion Index (CHII) Organizational Assessment. Based on their assessment results, sites then received tailored recommendations for needed PSE changes. They also received ongoing technical assistance to sustain their progress and meet the unique needs of their community.

In fall 2024, MOYMCA helped identify the Jefferson City YMCA as a partner in PSE implementation. Jefferson City Area YMCA is a regional association that oversees two local sites (Firley YMCA and Knowles YMCA) and works closely to support the Southern Boone YMCA. Not only did this partnership result in four PSE changes affecting the three local facilities, but it also led to a deeper interest in disability advocacy at the regional level.

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PSE changes have included representation from adults with disabilities on the Membership and Program Committee, additional training requirements for staff, adding disability-inclusive language at a policy level, and ensuring accessible parking spaces. Jefferson City Area YMCA has championed the PSE process and remains committed to advancing PSE work going forward, including the expansion of disability training for all staff in the coming year. This partnership highlights strong leadership and commitment at each location and has laid the foundation for ongoing sustainability efforts.

Thanks to the partnerships established between MODHP, MOYMCA, and all participating YMCA sites, a total of **20 different PSE changes** have been implemented or initiated across the state. Members with disabilities are now represented on program committees, able to enjoy accessible picnic areas, bring a direct support person at no additional fee, and more. Additionally, YMCA staff expanded their capacity to communicate effectively with people with disabilities and help them navigate their local facility. By working together to implement the PSE process, these partnerships have improved the accessibility of recreational facilities across Missouri—one YMCA at a time.

"Our partnership has allowed our Ys to become **more accessible to all individuals.** From a statewide perspective, we are able to share policy and environmental change wins at the local level and build them out for every Y, ensuring greater impact."

- Associate Director,
MO State Alliance of YMCAs

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