

TRAINING THE TRAINERS: ADAPTIVE SWIMMING IN PEDIATRICS

Lojovich J, Colaco S, Peitz M, Wiltgen M

Concordia University - St. Paul

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Purpose: The purpose was to promote swim education and educate our community on how to safely work with children with disabilities. The goal was to share our knowledge with people who could positively affect our community and ultimately fostering more inclusive environments.

Description: A community needs assessment survey was distributed to the Saint Paul East Side YMCA aquatics staff. The responses indicated interest and a need for learning about various pediatric disabilities. Thus, we created/delivered an hour-long presentation covering the benefits of aquatic activities, common conditions/disabilities, person-first language, and water safety. Information was gathered through research, our DPT class material, and working with pediatric and aquatic physical therapists. The hour was interactive with videos and Q&A opportunities.

Observations:

The YMCA staff completed a pre-survey assessing their confidence working with children with disabilities, their past experiences, disabilities they're interested in learning about, and preferred learning style. Participants took a postsurvey with the same confidence questions, and were asking if they learned anything new and what topics they wanted covered in future interactions. Pre-survey results revealed that 1/3 of participants had "little" to "no confidence" working with children of different physical abilities, and 1/3 had "little" to "no confidence" in their ability to work with children with mental disabilities. Afterwards, 12/12 participants felt "somewhat" or "very confident" in working with kids with mental and physical abilities.

Conclusions: The project aimed to provide instructors with the background and knowledge to confidently work with kids with disabilities and know when/how they should work with healthcare providers to provide the best/safest experience for the kids.

Implication: PTs have a responsibility to improve public health and decrease health disparities. Advocating for adaptive swimming programs and creating environments with more opportunities for children with disabilities increases the health of the community.