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Item No. 10
Halifax Regional Council
February 6, 2024

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed

Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: January 6, 2024

SUBJECT: **Increasing Access to Recreation Inclusion Support**

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

November 14, 2023, Regional Council motion (item 16.1):

MOVED by Deputy Mayor Deagle Gammon, seconded by Councillor Hendsbee THAT Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to provide a staff report to identify funding required to increase access to the Recreation Inclusion Support program for consideration in the 2024/25 budget.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, S.N.S. 2008, c. 39:

7A The purposes of the Municipality are to:

- (a) provide good government
- (b) provide services, facilities, and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality; and
- (c) develop and maintain safe and viable communities.

[...]

79A (1) Subject to subsections (2) to (4), the Municipality may only spend money for municipal purposes if

- (a) the expenditure is included in the Municipality's operating budget or capital budget or is otherwise authorized by the Municipality;

BACKGROUND

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) operates summer camp programming across the municipality. These summer camps are designed to offer a lower cost recreation opportunity to children in July and August each year. In 2023, there were 661 camps offered with 9,853 participants.

HRM has a history of providing staffing support to residents with various support needs in recreation programming. The Accessibility and Inclusion division was established in 2017 at which time, the first Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (CTRS) was hired to work as an Inclusion and Accessibility

Specialist. By 2022, two additional CTRSs were hired, bringing the complement of full-time permanent Inclusion and Accessibility Specialists to three.

There are seasonal inclusion casual staff hired by the Municipality that support participants in the recreation programs. The number varies by season, depending on the demand and availability of hiring qualified staff.

The positions that support inclusion for recreation programming are:

Inclusion Coordinators: complete intakes, creates behaviour plans and mentors staff.

Specialized inclusion staff: typically work 1:1 with children and youth with support needs and are required to be enrolled in a post-secondary program related to health services. They have experience working with individuals with disabilities and implementing behaviour plans.

Inclusion support staff: work at an entry level, this position is for staff who are interested in working with individuals who require support but have minimal experience. Inclusion support staff typically work with individuals with lower support needs.

Summer programming season is when the majority of inclusion staff are hired. In the summer of 2023, there were 73 casual inclusion staff hired: 18 inclusion coordinators, 26 Specialized Inclusion staff and 29 Inclusion support staff.

Inclusion support in Recreation Programming is typically requested for participants who require extra support at school and/or at home. These participants may have an existing physical, medical, behavioural and or developmental disability. Families are required to make appropriate arrangements for participants who require catheterization, tube feeding, suctioning, injections, and/or managing aggressive behaviours as per Attachment 1.

Individuals who require support indicate their preferred location and the preferred three weeks of camps through a “barcode” process on the recreation software system during registration. The barcode is open for a period of three weeks to give families time to sign up. Once the barcode is closed, recreation staff determine the staffing requirements and facility capacity to ensure that requests can be accommodated. Implementing the inclusion barcode process has allowed for more equitable registration for programming, primarily camps.

The Ready for Rec pilot program was created as another option for families who have children with more complex needs or who would benefit from an environment with fewer children and an increased number of staff. In 2018, the pilot was offered to children between 5 and 12 years old at three locations (Spryfield, Lower Sackville and Eastern Passage) offering two weeks at each location with 4-6 participants each week.

In 2019, the program was offered in Lower Sackville and Spryfield and due to COVID-19, the program was paused for two years. In 2022, Ready for Rec returned and expanded to include a program for youth (13-18 years old) with a disability, so that they could participate in specialized summer recreation programs.

Inclusion Statistics

Although the demand for inclusion support has increased since 2019, the average number of weeks of support a participant receives has remained consistent. In 2023, children who registered for summer camps averaged 2.65 weeks while children who registered for summer camps that required inclusion support, averaged 3 weeks.

The table below provides an overview of inclusion statistics from 2019-2023. The data for 2020 and 2021 reflect low enrollment due to public health measures associated with COVID-19.

| Year | Camp program | Ready for Rec | Total | Participants who used barcode to register | Number of undisclosed needs | Average Number of weeks received | Waitlist |
|------|--------------|-----------------------------|------------|---|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2019 | 133 | 19 | 152 | 102 | 50 | 2-3 weeks | No data available |
| 2020 | 29 | NA | 29 | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| 2021 | 111 | NA | 111 | 69 | 42 | 2-3 weeks | 15 |
| 2022 | 137 | 20 (children) 8 (youth) | 165 | 124 | 41 | 2.5 weeks | 9 (50% were able to be supported) |
| 2023 | 146 | 24 (children) 11 (youth) | 181 | 134 | 47 | 3 weeks | 44 (45% able to be supported). |

For facilities offering 1:1 inclusion support, there are approximately three inclusion spaces available per week, per facility. The number of facilities offering inclusion spaces varies based on demand at registration and is primarily the urban and suburban recreation centres, where historically there are the highest number of inclusion requests. More rural areas have not had as many inclusion requests.

Key Highlights from Canada-Wide Jurisdiction Scan

A jurisdictional scan of municipalities across Canada was conducted and it was found that there is no consistency across municipalities in how inclusion support is offered in recreation programs. During summer programming, some municipalities hire inclusion staff for an average of two weeks and others require participants to provide their own support staff for certain programs due to strict limitations on how support is provided. (See *Attachment 2* for details).

Summer programming provided by organizations, other than HRM Recreation Programming for individuals with disabilities, is limited. Within the municipality, disability-specific programs and programs run by universities and Multi-District facilities (MDFs), only have the capacity to provide 1-2 weeks of staffing support based on demand according to the information found. In addition, these programs have higher operating costs and charge for additional 1:1 staffing, therefore, registration costs can be expensive for some families. HRM Recreation Programming does not charge extra for the provision of an inclusion support staff.

DISCUSSION

One of the primary constraints associated with expanding inclusion supports for recreation programming is the recruitment of qualified staff. Specialized inclusion jobs have more requirements than that of a typical Day Camp Leader. Staff have made efforts through various channels to increase recruitment. Despite this, there have not been enough highly qualified staff applying to properly support the needs of participants.

Should Regional Council wish to expand inclusion supports for recreation programming, the number of weeks of inclusion support could be expanded or the Ready for Rec program could be expanded. Expanding from 3 to 4 the number of weeks of inclusion support for the same number of children would require a large increase in staffing, an increase in wages and increased overall capacity (space) in camps.

The more practicable way to increase support to children needing support in the near term is to expand the Ready for Rec program. Such an expansion would aim to see an increase in Ready for Rec from three locations to five locations. This potentially offers an additional 20+ summer programming spaces for participants with higher support needs.

Ready for Rec staff work in a more specialized environment than exists in the other programs and will often see participants with the highest support needs. Ready for Rec supports other recreation facilities by either taking campers into the program if space allows or by sharing staff with other inclusion programs.

An increase in the recruitment of qualified staff in the Ready for Rec program would be a benefit to the summer inclusion program. Should Council wish to expand inclusion supports, this would provide a starting point for doing so.

An expansion would include an increase in wages in order to improve recruitment of qualified staff, Wages for Specialized Inclusion with Ready for Rec would be increased from \$19.20/hour to \$22/hour, to better align with that of a Disability Respite Worker and an Educational Program Assistant (EPA) with Halifax Regional Centre for Education (HRCE). While there are alternative means to expand inclusion supports, expanding Ready for Rec provides a means to test the impact of increased wages on recruitment. Should the Ready for Rec Specialized Inclusion staff wages be increased, the Ready for Rec Coordinator wages should be increased from \$20.20/hour to \$23/hour. This wage increase would be justified as the Ready for Rec Coordinator work in a dual role of Summer Coordinator and Inclusion Coordinator.

Given the timelines between budget approval and summer programming, there is operational risk associated with delivering an expanded Ready for Rec program in the 2024/25 year, particularly with respect to finding additional locations.

Maintaining the status quo would see the continuation of provision of 3 weeks of inclusion support, for approximately 135 participants at camps in the recreation facilities and roughly 45 campers in the three Ready for Rec programs for a total of approximately 180 participants. This is currently included in the Parks & Recreation budget for 2024/25. Increasing the number of weeks of inclusion support from 3 to 4 within current budgets would require that the total number of children provided with inclusion support be reduced.

HRM Recreation Programming is committed to offering options for summer camp programs that are flexible and responsive to the needs of as many families as possible who are looking to access recreation programs.

Staff have included in the 2024/25 draft business plan, an initiative to conduct an analysis and evaluation of the Recreation Inclusion Program.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The 2024/25 Parks & Recreation draft budget includes a plan to continue to offer inclusion supports at current levels, i.e. Ready for Rec at 3 facilities and three weeks of inclusion staffing support in all HRM-operated summer camp programs, as staffing allows.

The following options to expand Ready for Rec, including increases to the wages for staff, are not budgeted for in 2024/25. Unless directed by Regional Council during the 2024/2025 budget discussions, the expansion of the Ready for Rec program would part of the 2025/26 operating budget.

Below is an estimated cost for staffing the Summer Inclusion Program through HRM Recreation Programming. Staffing costs vary depending on the availability of qualified staff and the number of inclusion requests.

| | Current Pay | Increased Pay | Variance |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Ready for Rec Coordinator | \$58,328 | \$66,413 | \$8,085 |
| Specialized Inclusion Support Staff | \$166,320 | \$190,575 | \$24,255 |
| Total Compensation Costs | \$244,648 | 256,988 | \$32,340 |

If the Ready for Rec Coordinator position increased from \$20.20/hour to \$23/hour, and the Ready for Rec Specialized Inclusion Support Staff increased from \$19.20/hour to \$22/hour, it is estimated that this would cost an additional \$32,340 to hire these positions for the summer. The expectation is that with a more competitive wage, recruitment will be more successful, allowing for an expansion inclusion programming.

Incremental costs associated with the option identified in this report are noted below. These costs would be offset slightly by grants and an anticipated increase in revenue due to the increase in capacity.

Expanding Ready for Rec from 3 to 5 Camps

| | Current (3 Camps) | Expanded (5 Camps) Increased Wages |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Ready for Rec Coordinator | \$58,328 | \$110,668 |
| Specialized Inclusion Support Staff | \$166,320 | \$317,625 |
| Programming Supplies | \$3,000 | \$5,000 |
| Total Costs | \$277,648 | \$433,313 |

The cost to expand Ready for Rec into five location is an estimated \$205,665 if wages are also increased.

RISK CONSIDERATION

There is a service delivery risk of not recruiting enough qualified staff to meet the goals, even with a pay increase, due to widespread staffing shortages in the disability support field. This could negatively impact the number of participants in the HRM Recreation Programming summer inclusion program. There is also service delivery risk associated with the timing of the budget and the expansion of the Ready for Rec program, including the risk of not finding appropriate physical locations in which to offer Ready for Rec.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community Engagement is in the long-term strategic plan of the Inclusion and Accessibility Department, in HRM Parks and Recreation. There was no engagement data available at the time of the writing of this report.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

No environmental implications were identified.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Administration of Medication and Personal Care Provisions
- Attachment 2: Jurisdictional Scan of Canadian Municipalities

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

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Parks and Recreation



Purpose

To provide direction on the administration of prescription/non-prescription medications and provision of health care to program participants.

Importance

Parks and Recreation offers accessible and inclusive programs and services

Program participants who require medication during program time are to receive the appropriate care and support that can reasonably be provided in a recreation environment

Evidence of Implementation

Administration of Medication and Health Care Provisions forms are complete.

Participant Copy: Administration of Medication and Personal Care Provisions to Program Participants

HRM Parks and Recreation staff will dispense pre-approved, time scheduled medications only, to a participant in a recreation program for them to remain in attendance. Non-prescribed drugs, commonly known as over-the counter medications, will not be dispensed by HRM Staff unless they are prescribed by a doctor and labeled by a pharmacy. All medications must be listed on the participant's Medical form.

HRM Parks and Recreation staff will not be responsible for assessing participants' nursing needs nor will HRM provide services such as, but not limited to:

- a) Injection of medication (excludes epi-pen)
- b) Catheterization
- c) Manual expression of the bladder/stomach
- d) Tube feeding
- e) Postural drainage
- f) Any such services that require medical certification
- g) Aspects of personal care responsibilities which require previous professional training/certification not offer as part of HRM's Personal Care Training Model.

It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to make all necessary arrangements for the administration of medical services as outlined above while their child attends an HRM recreation program. HRM Parks & Recreation staff will work with the parent/guardian to accommodate these arrangements within the daily program. Where there are questions regarding coverage or implementation of this policy please contact your local Community Recreation Center and/or the Inclusion and Access Specialist.

Definitions

Prescription Medication:

Medication that can be dispensed only with written instructions from a licensed health care provider (physician)

Pre-Approved Medications:

Medications that have been approved to be administered to participants after consultation with the parent/guardian and the Inclusion Specialist.

Non-prescription

Medications: Medications that do not require a physician's authorization (commonly known as over the counter drugs.) These include anti histamines, A.S.A. (Aspirin) or derivatives, and vitamins.

Health care provision: Care that needs to be provided to ensure the health and wellbeing of a participant.

Sufficient Notice: 2 weeks prior to the start of the program.

Expected Outcome

All program participants have a safe and enjoyable experience.

Policy update: April 2019

Implementation

Parents/Guardians of Persons Requiring medication administration and/or Health Care provisions:

- Complete and sign a Medications Administration and Health Care Provision Form.
- Always have someone available as a contact person in case of an emergency.
- Supply the required dose of medicine in the original container with the Pharmacy Label along with a measured dispensing tool. (i.e.: cup, spoon, dropper, etc.).
- Non-prescribed drugs, commonly known as over-the counter medications, will not be dispensed by HRM Staff unless they are prescribed by a doctor and labeled by a pharmacy.
- Daily, the parent/guardian is to bring the medication directly to the Program Staff. Minor participants, are not permitted to carry the medication except for: Epi Pens which are to remain on their person.
- At the end of the day the parent/guardian is to collect the medication from the Program Staff.
- The parent or guardian must assume an appropriate level of personal responsibility for medication administration/health care of their child.
- The parent/guardian must provide the Community Recreation Coordinator and/or the Aquatics Leisure Specialist with at least two weeks' notice if the provision of health care is required for the participant for the duration of the program.
- The parent/guardian must sign their child's medication in and out each day as they drop it off and pick it up from Program Staff.
- Parent/ Guardian is responsible for providing a personal care kit which includes, but not limited to necessary personal care items such as; gloves, diapers, change pad and wipes.



**Parks and Recreation
Administration of Medication and Health Care Provision Form**

Section 1: TO BE COMPLETED BY PARENT/GUARDIAN

Name of Participant _____

Parents/Guardians _____

Address _____

Postal Code _____

Home Phone _____ Daytime Phone _____

Recreation Program _____

Emergency contact (other than parent/guardian listed above):

Name _____

Phone _____

I hereby request, authorize and empower the Halifax Regional Municipality, Parks & Recreation Department, to:

- administer, or supervise the administration of, medication;
- provide health care to my child named above, as described in Section 2.

I hereby release the Halifax Regional Municipality, its Mayor, Councillors, Employees, Volunteers and Agents from and against all actions, claims or liability for any harm that may result from the administration of such medication or by the giving of such treatment to my child, including the personal injury or death of my child. I also agree to indemnify the Halifax Regional Municipality, its Mayor, Councillors, Employees, Volunteers and Agents against claims made on behalf of my child or by MSI or by any other person at any time arising out of the administration of medication or treatment as described herein. I acknowledge and understand that as a parent or guardian I am responsible to ensure there is medication in sufficient amount and dosage to meet the needs of my child every day my child participates in the program and requires the medication to be administered. I also understand and agree that if there is insufficient medication at the program location I will be contacted to make arrangements to transport new medication to the program location, or to make alternate arrangements for the care of my child for the remainder of the day. I hereby release the Halifax Regional Municipality, its staff members and volunteers, from any liability that may result from insufficient amounts of the medication being available at the program for administration to my child. I also understand that I am responsible for completing this form in the event that the prescribed medication, amount or frequency of dosage, handling or storage requirements change.

I have full and complete authority to authorize the administration of medication or provision of healthcare as herein described, and no other person's authorization is required. I agree to indemnify and save harmless the Halifax Regional Municipality against any liability incurred by the Halifax Regional Municipality where the medication is administered or the healthcare is provided as I have authorized, but where I have failed to disclose that another person's authorization was required.

Parent/Guardian's Name - Please Print

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Witness

Date

****Parents must complete an anaphylaxis action plan if applicable****

Special Considerations:

Possible side effects of medication/treatment:

Type of storage required for medication:

The administration of this medication or health care cannot be scheduled around the program and administered at home and that this administration by the Halifax Regional Municipality's Parks & Recreation staff and volunteers is necessary in order to permit my child to participate in the recreation program.

Date

Signature of Parent/Guardian

In accordance with Section 485 of the Municipal Government Act (MGA), the personal information collected on this form will only be used by HRM staff and, if necessary, individuals under service contract with HRM for purposes relating to recreation program administration. If you have any questions about the collection and use of this information, please contact HRM's Access and Privacy Office at 902-490-7460 or accessandprivacy@halifax.ca

Jurisdictional Scan of Canadian Municipalities

This table represents a list of municipalities that publicly advertise offering Inclusion Support in their recreation programs. It is not an extensive list. Important to note that all programs have limitation to the number of week or the kind of support they are able to provide.

| City | Services Offered |
|----------------------------|--|
| St. John's, NFLD | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assistance selecting a program • minor adaptations and accommodations • partial support from Recreation staff • full support from Inclusion staff (resources are limited and registration required) |
| Ottawa, Ontario | <p>Adults (18+) partnership program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day program • Social program • Summer camps (with and without staff support) <p>Youth Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medically fragile youth • Social recreation programs <p>Children in programs</p> <p>Shared Care (Inclusion support staff), available for 2 weeks per person in the summer</p> |
| Toronto, Ontario | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership for Inclusion services • 2 weeks of inclusion support per child (not 1:1) • 1 recreation program per season with inclusion support (not 1:1) <p>No support for behavioral intervention, personal or medical care, able to provide their own caregiver</p> |
| Hamilton, Ontario | Support for child and youth with disabilities in programs (support is limited) |
| Oshawa, Ontario | 1:1 or 1:2 support can be requested for participant. |
| Winnipeg, Manitoba | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability specific programs • ASL interpreters available • Accommodation requests • No charge for support people |
| Regina, Saskatchewan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapted programs • Leisure champions for programs (no do offer personal or lifting or behavioural interventions) |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to support children to a certain extent but families can provide their own care |
| Victoria, British Columbia | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion support in camps available, space is limited |