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How Adaptive Sports Promote Occupational Engagement and Quality of Life for Individuals with Disabilities in a Rural Community

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Abstract

- Purpose:** The purpose of this scholarly project is to address the barriers individuals with physical disabilities face through the development of adaptive sports programs; hereby, increasing their occupational engagement, quality of life (QOL), and life satisfaction.
- Background:** Individuals with disabilities, compared to the general population, have diminished health and QOL due to limited community participation and occupational engagement (Yazicioglu et al., 2012). Adaptive sports have shown to increase QOL and well-being for individuals with physical disabilities (Brown et al., 2021; Yazicioglu et al., 2012). Although, this population, specifically in rural communities, face many barriers to adaptive sports engagement including a lack of adaptive sports resources, adaptive equipment, adaptive sports facilities, and knowledge of how to include individuals with disabilities (Obradovic et al., 2021). To combat these barriers, an adaptive sports manual was developed to guide the implementation of adaptive sports programs within rural community facilities.
- Methods:** A comprehensive literature review was conducted to determine: (1) the characteristics of successful adaptive sports programs in rural communities, and (2) the impact of adaptive sports on individuals with disabilities. The literature review was guided by the Ecology of Human Performance (EHP; Dunn et al., 1994; Dunn, 2017) framework to support the development of an adaptive sports manual. A clinical needs assessment was completed prior to the on-site experience, and product development was then carried out at a YMCA facility in a rural community.
- Results:** Characteristics of successful adaptive sports programs include consideration of the viewpoints of individuals with disabilities, incorporation of universal design concepts, and involvement of coaches who are specialized in adaptive sports (Ryan et al., 2014; Schubauer, 2021). Additionally, the evidence overwhelmingly shows that adaptive sports lead to increased QOL, occupational engagement, and self-efficacy (Lape et al., 2018; Yazicioglu et al., 2012).
- Conclusion:** There is a clear need for increased adaptive sports opportunities in rural communities. The product titled, *YMCA Resource Manual for the Implementation of Adaptive Sports Programs*, will ensure that adaptive sports include pertinent characteristics and are offered to all individuals to help promote their occupational engagement and QOL.

Literature Review

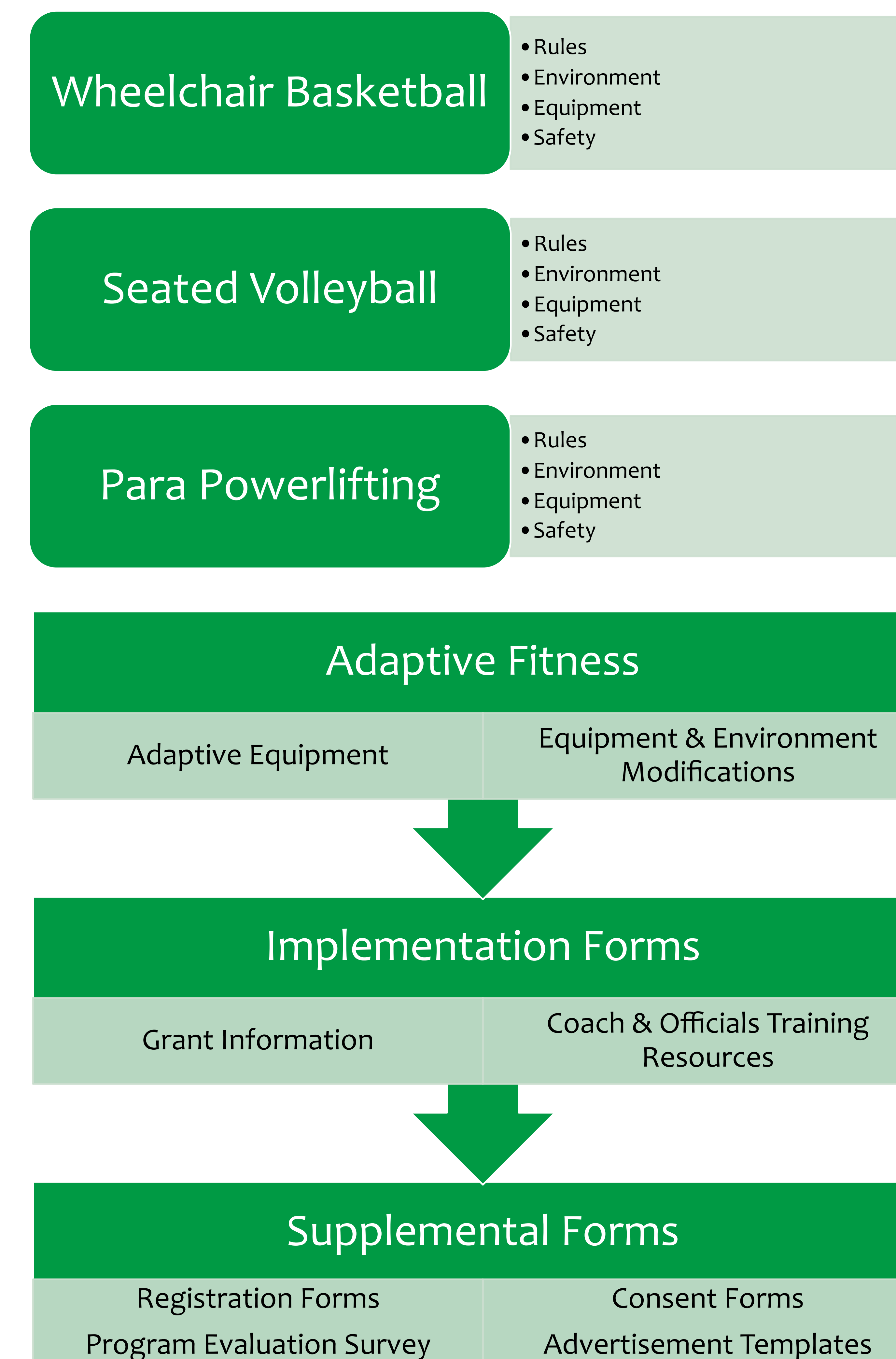
- Barriers that inhibit individuals with disabilities from engaging in sports include a lack of adaptive equipment, limited policies and procedures, lack of suitable programs, and restrictive physical environments (Declerck et al., 2021; Devi et al., 2013; Iverson et al., 2021; Obradović et al., 2021; van der Linden et al., 2022).
- Successful adaptive sports programs must include viewpoints of individuals with disabilities, universal design, qualified coaches, well-trained volunteers, and communication with health professionals (Declerck et al., 2021; Ryan et al., 2014; Schubauer, 2021).
- Engagement in adaptive sports leads to improved self-efficacy, perception of disability, QOL, confidence, life satisfaction, social connectedness, and community inclusion (Brown et al., 2021; Hanson et al., 2001; Jozkowski & Hewitt, 2020; McConkey et al., 2013; Yazicioglu et al., 2012).

Statement of Need

In the United States, 61 million adults, or 26% of the adult population have some type of disability, mobility impairments being the highest (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). Furthermore, individuals with disabilities have diminished health and QOL due to their disabilities. This evidence and the aforementioned adaptive sports benefits support the need for an adaptive sports manual to aid the implementation of adaptive sports programs in rural communities.

Product

YMCA Resource Manual for the Implementation of Adaptive Sports Programs

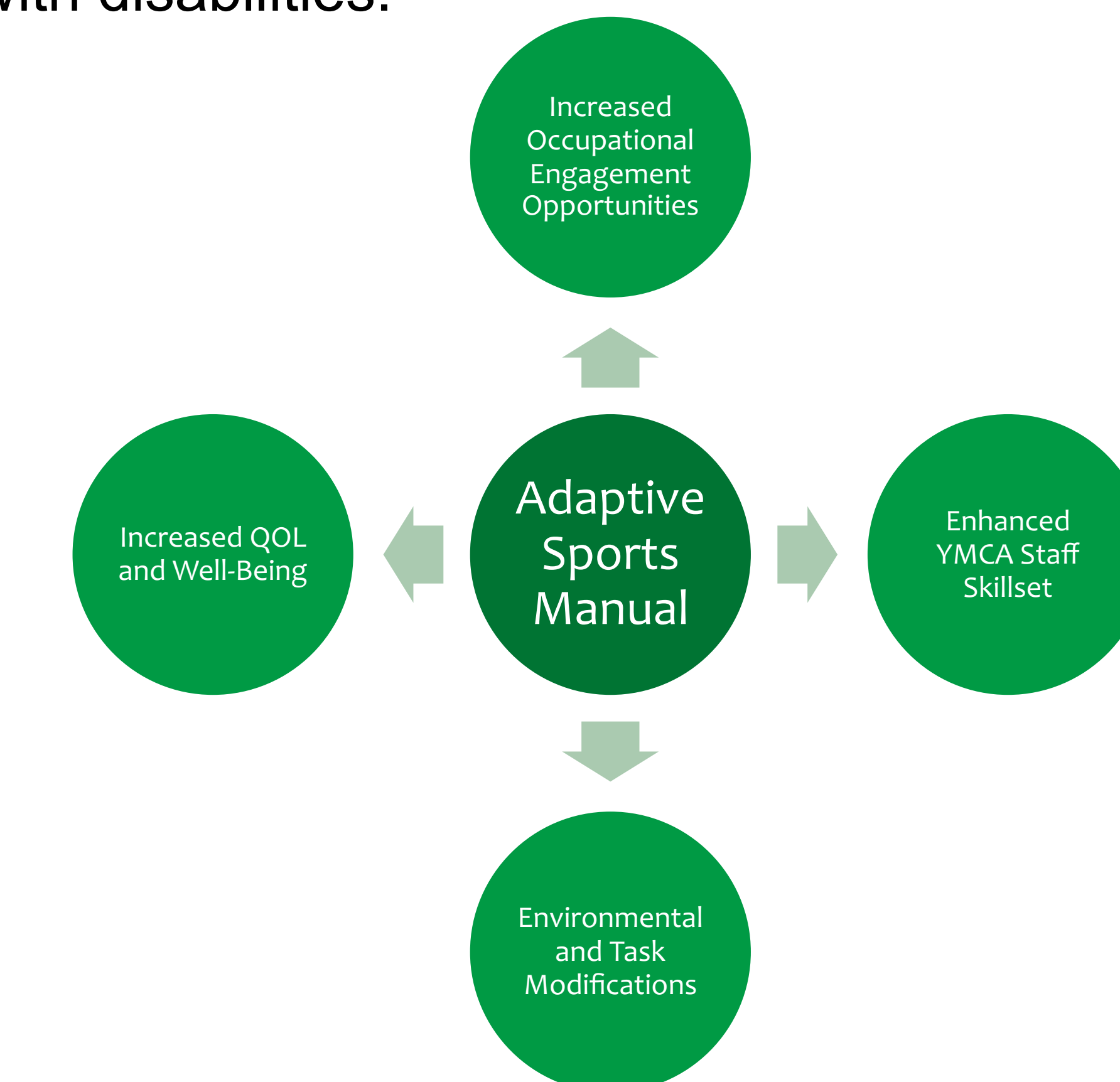


Limitations & Recommendations

- Limitations:**
 - Program implementation and review phases were not fully completed.
 - Local community agencies that were contacted refrained from donating to support program implementation.
 - Limited generalizability to other health and wellness institutions.
- Recommendations:**
 - Administer program evaluation surveys to all program participants to ensure program sustainability.
 - Inform future occupational therapy capstone students of this scholarly project so that they can use it to implement adaptive sports within their own rural communities.

Contribution to Practice

- Occupational therapy practitioners are more than qualified to implement adaptive sports programs as they possess skills apparent in the product such as occupational analysis and environmental modification skills (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2020).
- Since the product was built upon occupational therapy concepts it will shed light on the importance of the occupational therapy profession and how it can impact individuals outside the traditional clinical settings.
- The adaptive sports manual will enhance YMCA staff members' skillsets to help promote occupational engagement opportunities and QOL for individuals with disabilities.



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