

# Overcoming Barriers to Participation in TOPSoccer

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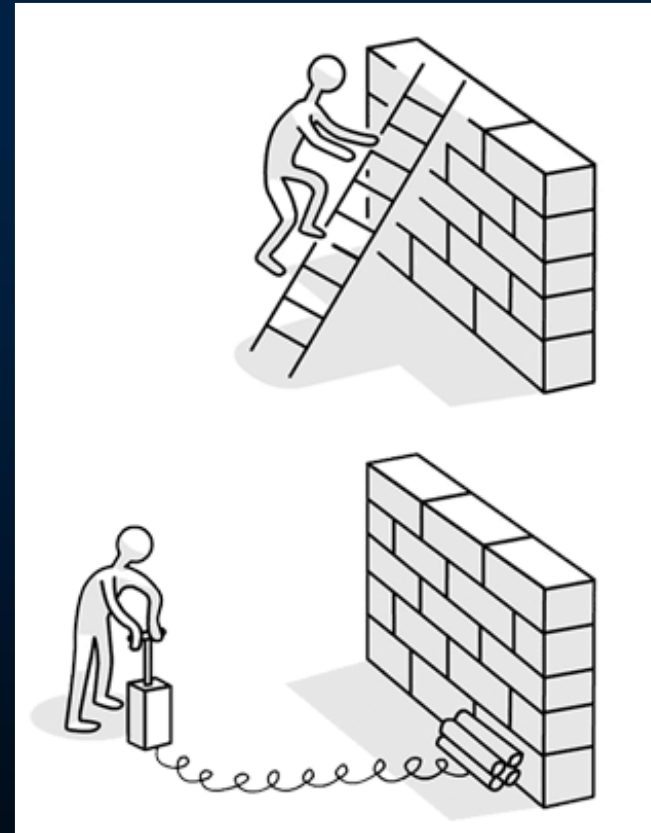
# TOPSoccer – Overcoming Barriers

- This presentation or resource is for you if you want:
  - To become involved in TOPSoccer
  - To grow your TOPSoccer program
    - Recruit more athletes and volunteers
  - To improve your program based on the needs of your athletes and parents
  - To learn basic principles for adapting activities for athletes with disabilities
- Or you:
  - Coach recreational and travel teams and may have athletes with “invisible” disabilities



# Importance of Overcoming Barriers

- Physical activity is arguably more important for people with disabilities than for those without disabilities
  - 66% higher rate of obesity
- Additional benefits of physical activity
  - Increased self efficacy and physical confidence
  - Opportunity to connect with other youth with disabilities
  - Reduced stress, depression, and pain



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# Why TOPSoccer?



- Allows integration with typically developing “buddies” while eliminating:
  - Anxiety of being teased by peers
  - Uneasiness about own perception of lack of ability

# Why TOPSoccer?

- Youth with disabilities are empowered through physical activities with:
  - Individualized goals
  - Opportunities for success
  - Supportive peers
  - “Important” adults
  - Family involvement
  - Opportunities to make own decisions



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# The Buddy System

- **Ideal** TOPSoccer Environment
  - Consistent buddy base with training
- **Real** TOPSoccer Environment
  - Head coach plans session, introduces activities, and adapts activities for each athlete throughout
- *How can we bring the real world closer to the ideal world?*

# Recruiting Buddies

- Partner with universities to recruit students pursuing degrees in education or health sciences
  - Special Education
  - Physical Therapy
  - Occupational Therapy



# No Soccer Experience? No Problem!



- Head coach plans and leads sessions
  - “Buddies” can echo the coach’s instructions, motivate, celebrate, and help manage behaviors
- Incentives of service learning with TOPSoccer
  - Volunteer hours
  - Apply classroom knowledge
  - Develop leadership skills
  - Gain a new perspective on working with youth with disabilities
  - FUN!



# Involving Club/Recreational Teams

- Team Building
  - Identify leadership qualities in athletes
- Life Lessons
  - Experience is the best way to promote mutual understanding and acceptance
- Tip: Consider when your sessions are held
  - Conflict with league play and tournaments
  - Research Special Olympics schedule because athletes participate in multiple sports



# Recruiting University Teams

- 56% of male and 67% of female student-athletes believe in their social responsibility to participate in community service
- Over 80% of student-athletes volunteer at least once a year
- 44% serve at least a few hours a month



# Recruiting University Teams

- NCAA Division II
  - Encouraging community engagement versus community service
    - Bringing the community to campus to “experience Division II”
    - Building lasting relationships and community partnerships
- NCAA Division III
  - Official partnership with Special Olympics



# The “Greyhound” Model

- St. Francis SC (Indianapolis, IN) partners with University of Indianapolis Women’s Soccer
  - 4 year partnership
- All players volunteer on a single Saturday and host the TOPSoccer athletes at the next day’s game
- Individual players come to Saturday sessions when not traveling for league play



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# The "Greyhound" Model

- UIndy Women's Soccer hosts "TOPSoccer Day with the UIndy Greyhounds" annually
  - Free admission for athletes and discounted admission for families
  - Recognition at halftime
  - UIndy gear for each TOPSoccer player and volunteer
  - Autographs and a meet and greet with UIndy players



# The “Bulldog” Model

- Dynamo FC (Indianapolis, IN) partnered with Butler Women’s Soccer to form a TOPSoccer Academy
- One hour sessions are held on 6 consecutive Sunday nights
- Butler upperclassmen coach activities during “station practice”
- Participation from Butler coaches, athletic trainers, and community volunteers



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# Tips for Involving University Teams

- Be proactive!
  - Research their schedule and see what days they will be available to help
- Find a team contact
  - Are there players on that team from your club? Are players special education, pre-PT, or pre-OT majors?



# Overcoming Environmental Barriers

## Barriers

- Lack of accessible restrooms
- Inconveniently located facilities
- Gravel parking lots
  - Prevent access of wheelchairs and walkers

## Solutions

- Hold sessions at local colleges/universities
  - Comply with ADA standards
- Pick fields close to paved parking lots
- Practice on turf if possible

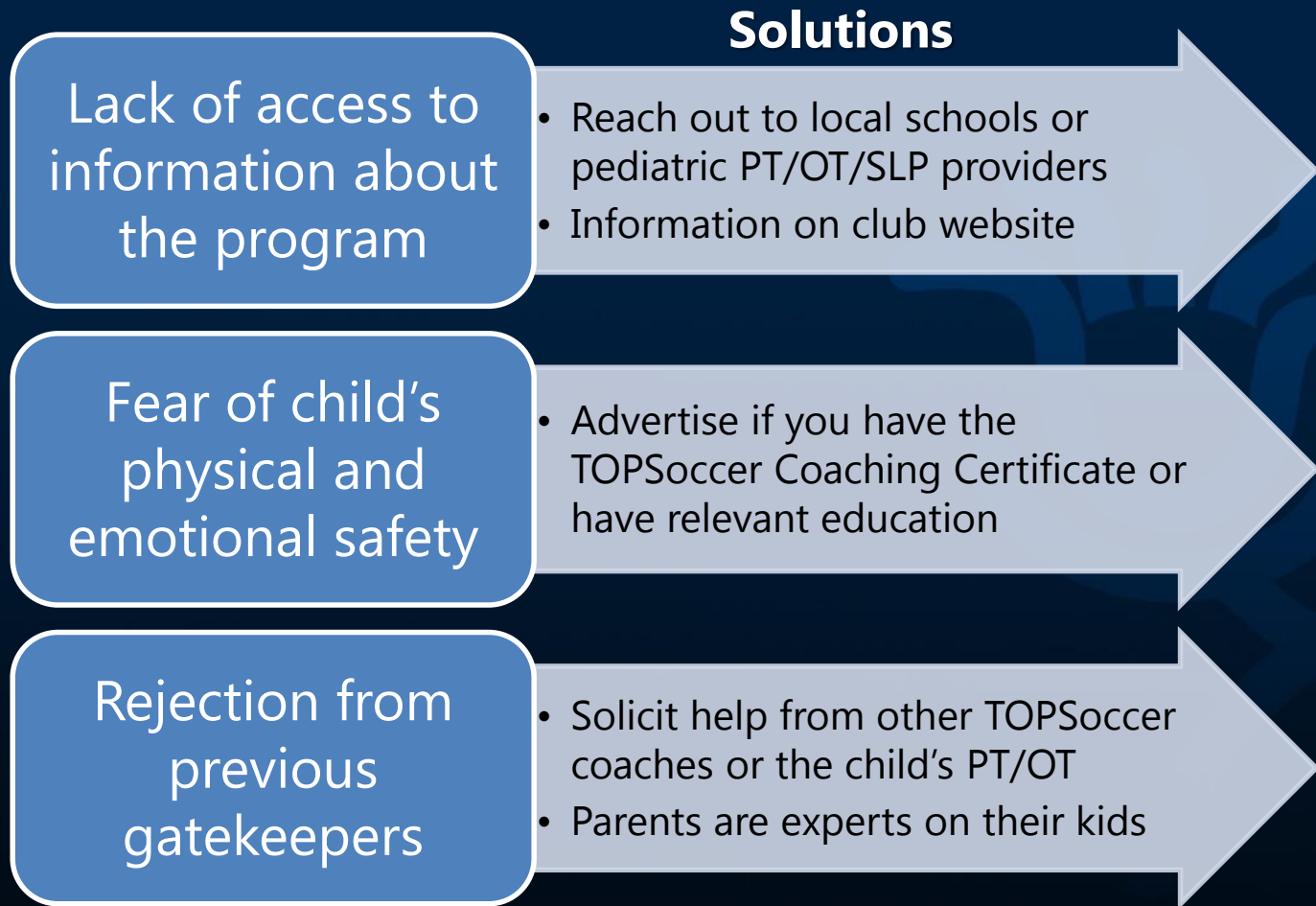


# Overcoming Financial Barriers

- Parents have identified financial barriers to participation in physical activity
  - Grants for uniforms, equipment donations from community
    - Liberty Mutual Insurance Play Positive Campaign  
<https://www.playpositive.com/pledge/>
      - Earn \$2500 to support your team
      - Register your team and recruit people to “pledge” to promote good sportsmanship in youth sport
    - U.S. Soccer Foundation Grants  
<http://www.ussoccerfoundation.org/our-grants/>
      - Safe Places to Play Grants
      - Program Grants
    - U.S. Soccer Foundation “Passback” Program  
<http://www.ussoccerfoundation.org/our-programs/passback>
      - Request equipment



# Overcoming Social-Level Barriers



**Barriers**



# Adapting Activities

- Almost any activity can be modified or adapted
  - Modify equipment or rules
  - Have well defined boundaries
  - Reduce playing area
  - Encourage players in wheelchairs to dribble using their chair
  - Use a deflated soccer ball, lightweight ball, beeper ball, or an oversized ball
  - Use target that makes noise when hit
- An example session follows on the next slides
  - Focus on the adaptations than can be applied to any activity rather than the activity itself

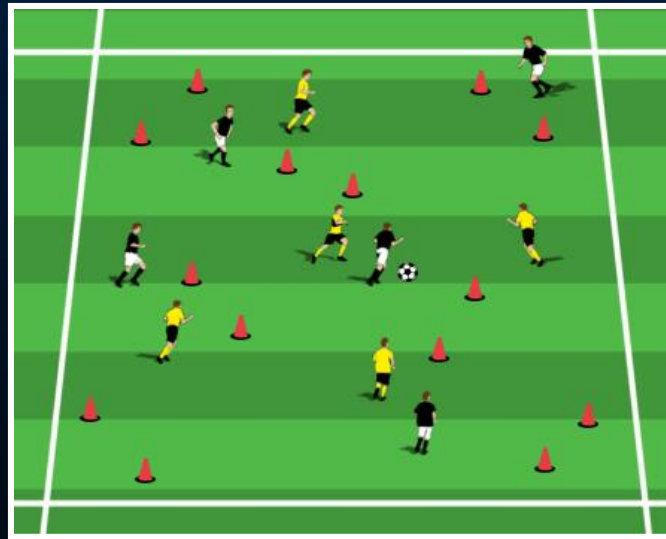
# Warm-Up

- Greeting game
- Athletes dribble around a grid; coach yells “freeze!” and gives directions
  - “Find another person and give them a high five”
  - “Tap the top of your ball four times with your feet”
  - “Get back to back with a buddy”
- **Adaptations:** Incorporate visual demonstrations, give a few options with each “freeze!” to allow inclusion, have pairs come up with next instruction, facilitate social interaction with peers and buddies



# Gate Game

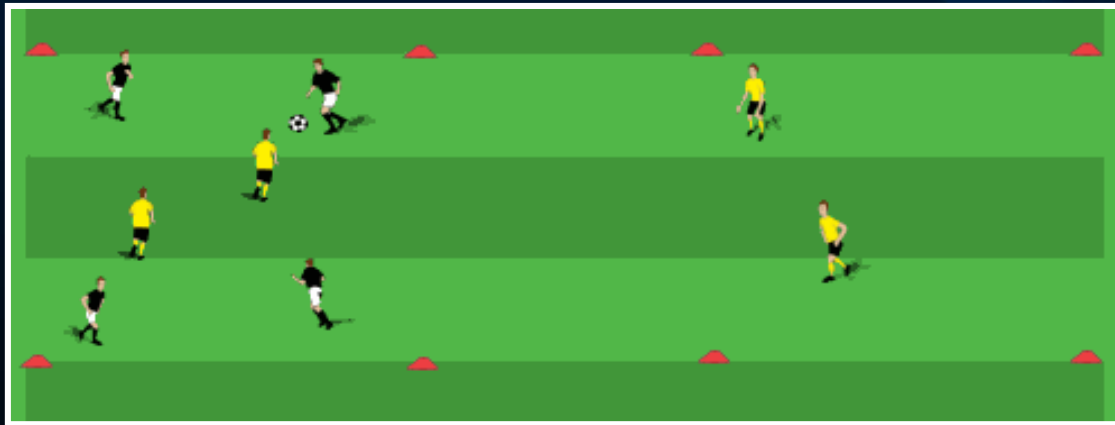
- Passing or dribbling through gates with a buddy
- **Adaptations:** Make athletes competitive with themselves, add cognitive tasks (i.e. dribble through only certain color gates)



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# 2 Square Possession

- Keep away in your square with 2 of the opposing team's defenders
- Defenders win the ball, play it back to their square, and possess with 2 of the opposing team's defenders
- Adaptations: Mix defenders (2 athletes, athlete and buddy), add challenges (i.e. score a point per 5 passes)



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# Transition to Game Play

- Teach positions with matching pinnies and cones
- Play a game of keep away requiring players to remain within 5 steps of the cone
- **Adaptations:** Color matching, can also be applied to small sided games (i.e. have teams in same colored pennies trying to score on goals of the same colored cones)



# "Big Game"

- Small field, mixed teams of buddies and athletes
- "Bumpers" on the sidelines
- If a single player is dominating game play, offer them an additional challenge (i.e. "can you help Jason score a goal?" or "try only using your left foot")
- **Adaptations:** Buddies facilitate game play (i.e. provide opportunities for less involved players and challenge dominating players), rotate who initiates play on a dead ball, involve siblings



# "Invisible" Disabilities

- No outward characteristics to suggest a disability
- Challenges with:
  - Attention
  - Impulse control
  - Language processing
  - Motor skills
- Affect >10% of children in the United States
  - Likely that these athletes will be on your teams



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# Coaching Tips – “Invisible” Disabilities

- Tip: Incorporate station practice
  - 1:1 small group instruction with a coach
  - Allows those who have mastered a skill to continue to independently practice
- Tip: Provide structure and predictability
  - Invite parents to practice
  - Provide an overview of practice
    - Wipe off board with practice plan

# Coaching Tips – “Invisible” Disabilities

- Tip: Provide a visual demonstration
  - Give relevant cues
- Tip: Prevent challenging behaviors
  - Allow for successful challenge and exploration
    - “Dribble as fast as you can, with the ball as close to you as possible, from one cone to another”



Thank you for being  
involved in TOPSoccer!

Questions?



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# TOPSoccer – The Role of the Buddy

- Be one of the first 25 attendees and take home a Slow Motion/ Sensory Soccer ball
- Taught by coach Auke Wiersma in the Grand Ballroom of the Marriott Hotel TODAY from 2:15 to 3:15 PM





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