

Prepared by the Human Services Division, TCSD



The State of an **Inclusive** City



Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

TEN YEARS AGO the City of Temecula embarked on a journey to promote greater inclusion of youth and families with special needs that would provide tools and support to ensure full access and meaningful participation in the community. A family's personal story with autism was courageously made public, with a plea for love, support, patience and resources from the community in which they loved. That passionate call to action resonated with the City Council as a public policy and quality of life focus. The City Council then directed Community Services to prepare an addendum to the adopted Youth Master Plan (YMP) that would focus on serving youth with special needs. Since then, the City of Temecula continues to champion Inclusion both locally and regionally. The City of Temecula recognizes that while the concept of community inclusion is not a new idea, it aims to create a paradigm shift in how people think of disability and how those with disabilities experience life in their community. The philosophy of the City of Temecula is that all people – regardless of ability – can take advantage of quality programs, facilities, parks and open spaces that make their lives and communities great. To support this, the City of Temecula's Community Services Department in collaboration with the City Manager's Office, aims to improve and advance access to programs and activities through a myriad of opportunities.

CHALLENGE

According to the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), only two in five park and recreation agencies have a formal inclusion policy that ensure all members of the community can access parks and recreation. Some of the greatest challenges of providing inclusive services are insufficient funding, inadequate staffing, facility space shortages and lack of training.

BACKGROUND

Developed in 2007-2008 through a community-based process involving a wide range of youth and stakeholders, the Youth Master Plan responded to the growing challenges of providing productive, healthy and diverse activities and long-term support needed by the City's youth, teens and parents. The YMP provides an action plan that involves changes in the areas of safety, recreation, life and job skills, transportation, public-private partnerships and more.

The City Council recognized that youth with special needs and their families have unique and complex issues that are not easily identified, let alone addressed. The Community Services Department engaged a wide range of stakeholders with a vested interest in supporting the community's youth with special needs in an effort to create an additional set of tailored and focused approaches to addressing identified challenges. As such, the community's assets and needs of youth with special needs and their families provided the foundation and direction for developing strategies and actions that facilitate partnerships, leverage existing resources and capitalize on the "can do" spirit throughout the community.

As previously discussed, in July 2009, the Temecula City Council directed the Community Services Department to prepare an addendum to the adopted Temecula Youth Master Plan that focuses on serving youth with special needs. This addendum outlines a targeted set of strategies and actions developed through a community-based approach for community-driven implementation.

DEFINING INCLUSION

Community Inclusion means all people regardless of their abilities or disabilities, have the right to be respected as valuable members of their communities. The Youth Master Plan outlines the community's vision, values and desired outcomes. The planning process helped to define youth with special needs to provide clear direction on who is to be served by the City's plans, strategies and actions.

In the City of Temecula, a youth with special needs is any child exhibiting physical, cognitive, emotional, or social needs who requires reasonable accommodations to participate in community activities.

FEDERAL LAWS

There are three major federal laws that protect the rights of people with disabilities and are especially important pieces of legislation that explicitly discuss disability rights. These are the Rehabilitation Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The Rehabilitation Act makes it illegal for programs that receive federal funding, such as universities, to discriminate on the basis of disability. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) ensures public schools serve the educational needs of students with disabilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act prohibits discrimination based on disability in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation and all public and private places that are open to the general public.

GOALS

The success of the City of Temecula's Youth Master Plan served as a catalyst to the Southwest Riverside County Autism Task Force, Community Services, Human and Inclusive Services and local and regional special needs programs. The Youth Master Plan Strategic Directions outline Temecula's major goals for Inclusion:

1. Educate and inform Community about youth with special needs and available services
2. Promote Volunteerism Opportunities
3. Expand training among key constituencies
4. Build new or expand current partnerships among public and private sector organizations to improve coordination, bridge gaps in services and leverage resources and funding
5. Provide, facilitate, collaborate and encourage programs and services

Removing barriers and providing supports to an individual may make participation possible, however unless the environment is welcoming, that individual may not be or feel included as a valued member of the community. The City of Temecula aims to advance and achieve inclusion by influencing, inspiring and changing perceptions, and fostering relationships that encourage people with disabilities to participate in their community. For people with special needs, being included is fundamentally about relationships, friends, families and community. Temecula views inclusion as a

MISSION

The City of Temecula strives to provide diverse, accessible and inclusive programs and services for youth, families and individuals with cognitive, physical, and sensory disabilities to expand opportunities that are important to enhance quality of life in an environment that promotes dignity, success and self-determination.

VISION

A community where people of all abilities are fully accepted, respected and included in all aspects of the community including housing, transportation, employment, education and recreation.

method to bring communities together, embrace differences and celebrate commonalities. In short, the City views inclusion as an ongoing display and critical ingredient to our Family First focus, which takes pride in providing a safe, supportive and loving community for all that call Temecula home.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

As a reflection of our commitment to the values of inclusion, the City of Temecula is proud of the many accomplishments in the areas of recreation, education, workforce, facilities, parks, and community engagement. Here are some selected highlights that exemplify the City's commitment to Inclusive Services.

Providing High Quality Programs, Promoting Equity and Inclusion, Building Partnerships and Influencing Communities Locally and Regionally

Temecula City Council Direction

- Temecula City Council adopted the **Youth Master Plan, Special Needs Addendum** that focuses on serving youth with special needs. The Youth Master Plan outlines a targeted set of strategies and actions developed through a community based approach to advance inclusion in the community.
- The City has established a **Human Services Division and Inclusion Services Specialist** to ensure individuals with disabilities have seamless **access to programs**, services and public events. The Community Services Department provides a team of staff dedicated to the inclusion of individuals with special needs in all aspects of the community.
- The Human Services Division is **building proactive outreach efforts** that promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in the community. This includes promoting inclusion on City social media platforms; recognizing the talent and abilities of people with special needs and the agencies who support them; engaging the community in inclusive practices and; establishing relationships with service providers, educational organizations and safety personnel.
- **Temecula City Council** led the formation of the **Southwest Riverside Autism Task Force**. A task force comprised of elected officials from surrounding cities: Temecula, Murrieta, Wildomar, Lake Elsinore, Canyon Lake, Menifee and Hemet with the goal to find solutions to the growing challenges faced by individuals with autism as it relates to health care, education, housing and employment.
- The **Southwest Riverside Autism Task Force** produced the region's first **Special Needs Resource Guide and Human Services Resource Guide**. The guides are comprehensive directories of available resources and services for people with disabilities.
- The **Southwest California Autism Task Force** produced the **Autism Community Playbook** adopted by the **County of Riverside Board of Supervisors**. The Autism Community Playbook is a roadmap to assist parents of newly diagnosed children with navigating services that are crucial to the development of their child.

Community Services, Recreation, Special Events

- The Community Services Department offers ***inclusive and specialized programs*** and services for people of all ages and abilities: ***High Hopes, Supporting Kids Involving Parents (SKIP), Social Skills Park Program, Youth Advisory Council, Inclusive Community Garden Program, Visual Arts, Dance, Music, Adaptive Sports, Adaptive Swim and Job and Life Skills.***
- Community Services offers ***Special Events***, which provide ***inclusive alternatives to participation*** at community-wide ***special events: Easter Egg Hunts, Temecula Special Games, Breakfast with Santa, Carnivals and Parades.***
- Community Services hosts an annual ***Sensory Friendly Public Safety Event*** to introduce individuals with special needs to first responders and safety personnel in a sensory friendly environment.
- ***Temecula Valley Museum*** hosts ***“Super Parents”*** exhibit produced by Lucile Packard Foundation for Children’s Health. The exhibit features families through photography, artifacts, and hands-on interactive elements intended to showcase the life of parents raising a child with special health needs.
- City of Temecula hosts the ***Light it Up Blue*** as part of its annual ***Autism Awareness*** Celebration and Temecula Special Games participants. The event commemorates World Autism Day by lighting City Hall in Blue-- the color that signifies awareness and acceptance of individuals with autism.
- City of Temecula hosts the ***Light it Up Yellow & Blue*** as part of ***World Down Syndrome Day*** to raise awareness and acceptance for individuals with Down Syndrome, who are also participants in the City’s annual Special Games.
- Community Services Department and the ***Mary Phillips Senior Center*** are currently ***expanding the availability and presence of alternate transportation services*** for people of all ages and abilities.
- The Community Services Department maintains ***contract agreements*** for departments ***to provide translation and interpreter services*** for customers, patrons and users who are ***hearing impaired.***

Community Education for Public Private Agencies and Persons and Families with special needs

- The Community Services Department ***consults with cities and communities on best practices and sharing resources.***

- The City of Temecula in partnership with Department of Rehabilitation, EXCEED and Inland Regional Center provide ***Sensitivity Training*** to ***public and private agencies***.
- ***Temecula Libraries*** participate in annual ***Sensitivity Training*** for library personnel. Temecula Public Library offers high quality ***inclusive story time programs*** and special needs friendly environment.
- ***The City of Temecula*** in collaboration with the ***Riverside County Sheriff's Department*** hosted an ***Autism Risk & Safety Management Training*** for Police, Safety and First Responder Personnel.
- To link services for parents to those provided to youth with special needs, Community Services in partnership with public-private agencies host ***educational workshops and support programs for parents and caregivers***.
- To ensure individuals and families of special needs have ***access to the latest information*** on ***health related services***, Community Services hosts a community wide ***Health and Community Resource Fair***.
- Community Services in partnership with public-private agencies hosts ***safety and emergency preparedness workshops*** to enhance the community's ability to meet the needs of individuals and families with special needs. The workshops ensure that facilities and residents are ***equipped with the resources, support and preparedness in the face of an emergency in order to maintain their independence***.
- ***The City of Temecula*** presented at the ***League of California Cities*** on ***"Creating an Inclusive Community"***. League of California Cities is an association of California city officials who work together to enhance their knowledge and skills, exchange information and combine resources so that they may influence policy decisions that affect cities.
- ***The City of Temecula*** in partnership with ***Temecula Valley Unified School District, Department of Rehabilitation, and D'Vine Path*** presented on ***"Engaging People with Special Needs in Your Community"*** hosted by ***Engaging Local Government Leaders (ELGL)***.

Workforce and Professional Development

- ***Community Services Department*** in collaboration with ***Economic Development*** established a ***job and life skills curriculum with a vocational training*** component to address workforce and ***employment for people with special needs***. The Global Citizens programs in partnership with ***Spero Vineyards*** and ***Wilson Creek*** offer on the job training for students with special needs.

Students are also offered opportunities with the City's Internship Program. The City participates in the Inland Regional Center's Paid Internship Program funded by to hire interns throughout the city and community. This program has promoted community partnerships such as the internship program with Temecula's JDS Studio who offers a production program for interns with autism.

- Global Citizens Viticulture & Horticulture Vocational Program was **awarded grant funding** from **Western Riverside Council of Governments**, and **Autism Speaks**.



- **City Viticulture Program replication** in Fallbrook and in San Jose. **D'Vine Path** in Fallbrook is a vocational program for young adults with special needs integrating viticulture and the arts.

- *The City of Temecula* hosted an annual **Inclusive Workforce Luncheon** that invites hundreds of leaders from the business community including hiring managers and HR representatives to

improve employment outcomes among people with special needs.

- City of Temecula serves on the **Southwest Transition Committee** to improve employment options among high school and adults with special needs.
- Community Services hosts community **college and university excursions** with specialized tours and information on **Disabled Students Programs & Services (DSPS)**.

Infrastructures

- The Community Services and Public Works departments **expanded programs and play structures** to exceed ADA standards to offer inclusive and accessible play for children of all abilities at **two City Parks**: Margarita Community Park and Pala Community Park.

Public Affairs

- **Circus Vargas honors** the City of Temecula and special needs community in a special opening night, **"Honoring Heroes of the Special Needs Community"**. The City of Temecula annually prepares and presents a proclamation in support of **Circus Vargas Days**.

- On behalf of the Southwest Riverside Autism Task Force, the City of Temecula worked with **Disneyland Public Affairs, Government Relations** on positively impacting the **new Disability Access Service (DAS) policy**.
- **The City of Temecula** recognized the non-profit **Sesame Workshop** for promoting autism awareness through the introduction of Julia, a Muppet with autism. As part of the show's nationwide campaign to "See Amazing in All Children," **City of Temecula** and the **Southwest Riverside Autism Task Force** **received** the same **support** for their commitment to inclusion. To show their ongoing support, the **City received** copies of the new book, **"We're Amazing, 1, 2, 3" from Sesame Workshop** which were shared with the Temecula Public Library and local special needs non-profits.
- **Partnership** with **developer David Niemeijer** of the **Proloquo2go assistive ware** application. The City in partnership with Proloquo2go provided complimentary use of the app to Temecula citizens with special needs through local non-profits and the Temecula Public Library.
- **Supporting Public-Private Partnerships** that **improve coordination, bridge gaps in services, and leverage resource opportunities**. A few partners are TVUSD, Our Nicholas Foundation, Comprehensive Autism Center, Department of Rehabilitation, Inland Regional Center, Rady's Children's Hospital, Temecula Valley Hospital, Toward Maximum Independence, Care Rite, Cole Vocational, EXCEED and Connections in Nature.

Special Recognition

- Based upon the individual and collective efforts of the City Council, **the 2013 Champion of the Community** was awarded by the California Parks & Recreation Society for the advocacy of children with special needs.
- City of Temecula received the **2013 Inland Regional Center's Spotlight** on **"Champions for Change, City of Temecula: A Pioneer in Inclusion"**.
- **Inclusive and Accessible Eagle Soar Playground and Splash Pad** at Margarita Community Park awarded **2016 Award of Excellence for Design and Park Planning, Specialty I** by California Parks & Recreation Society.
- **Global Citizens Viticulture & Horticulture Vocational Program** awarded **2019 Creating Community Award of Excellence for Economic Vitality** by California Parks & Recreation Society.
- 2013 Our Nicholas Foundation **"Big Heart Award"** presented to City of Temecula for amazing **support** for the Autism community.
- **Special Congressional Recognition** for the City's commitment to serving the autism community.

- State of California ***Senate Recognition*** for ***2017 Autism Impact Award***.
- City of Temecula recognized by ***Toward Maximum Independence*** for ***demonstrating outstanding leadership and commitment for full-inclusion*** in society for people living with disabilities.
- ***City of Murrieta Proclamation*** to recognize the Southwest Riverside Autism Task Force and ***Murrieta's commitment*** to encourage all citizens to work together to ***ensure that individuals with Autism are accurately diagnosed and appropriately treated throughout their lives***.

LOOKING AHEAD

While the City of Temecula has successfully gained local and regional support for innovative programs and services geared to advance and increase inclusion, we recognize that there is still more work to be done.

One in five children in the U.S. has a special health care need – a chronic medical condition, physical, developmental, cognitive, behavioral or emotional need that requires special accommodations and more than routine health care. Approximately 28% of residents in the City of Temecula are under the age of 18, a percentage that is well above the state average and figure that clearly demonstrates the need to tailor programs and services towards a younger demographic of the community. Of the 28% of youth, 12% are youth with disabilities.

As disability becomes more prevalent, the City of Temecula recognizes the importance of putting inclusion at the forefront of its municipal practices to address the ongoing complex issues of housing, employment, transportation and health services. Temecula promotes the active and informed participation of parents and individuals with special needs in shaping and influencing public policies that affect their families and future generations to come.

