

Everybody Active

A joint initiative of the BC Recreation & Parks Association and the Heart & Stroke Foundation of BC & Yukon

Increasing Access Success Story

LIFE (Leisure Involvement For Everyone)



Why it started...

The Leisure Involvement for Everyone (LIFE) program originated in the District of Saanich over 10 years ago. Its inception was motivated by a goal to make recreation available to *all* members of the community, particularly individuals on low income. Prior to the introduction of LIFE, the Manager of Community Services at the time was unsatisfied with the existing leisure access policy. She felt the onerous application process further stigmatized families on low income by requiring them to prove their financial misfortune before being deemed eligible for a subsidy.

After attending a conference and hearing about the Edmonton Access to Recreation Strategy and Logic Model and its focus on the 'community values' of human dignity, personal wellness and health, social justice, and quality experiences, the manager decided it was time for a change.

What it is...

The LIFE program is fee assistance model that ensures recreation facilities are financially accessible across the Capital Regional District (Greater Victoria).

Drop-in Programs: A LIFE membership provides 52 free drop-in sessions per year for each individual in the family at any facility in the Greater Victoria area. This includes swimming, skating, aerobics and the weight room. All recreation departments in the Greater Victoria area offer the same drop-in provision through the LIFE program.

Registered Programs: Each local government offers varying forms of fee subsidy for registered programs within the community of residence; this typically means a 50% discount on recreation programs.

Uptake of LIFE has been growing increasingly over the years. There are over 4,000 LIFE participants in the District of Saanich alone.

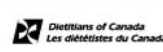
Why this initiative is a promising practice...

Recreation staff in Greater Victoria are strongly supportive of processes that do not stigmatize low income populations and do not require them to prove their financial status in order to merit access to recreation. An inter-municipal commitment to making recreation more accessible and 'top-down buy-in' from upper management provides the necessary support to make this happen.

Applying for a LIFE membership does not involve bringing in government documentation or an interview process. Income is self-declared on the application and memberships are

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administered by front desk staff. In Saanich, the Community Services Programmer continues to work with staff to make sure all members feel welcomed and are treated with equal respect.

A formal evaluation on the LIFE program is currently being conducted in the District of Saanich. The Community Services Programmer is interested in who is using the LIFE program, but more importantly, who is *not* using the program and how access could be improved. She would like to enhance their outreach to non-participants to include even more people in the benefits of recreation.

Find out more...

Capital Region (Greater Victoria) communities offering the LIFE program:

[Saanich](#)
[Victoria](#)
[Oak Bay](#)
[Esquimalt](#)
[Juan de Fuca](#)

BC communities outside of Greater Victoria have also adopted the LIFE program!

[Campbell River](#)
[Penticton](#)

To learn more about how you could offer a similar program in *your community*, check out the “How did they do it?” profile on the Everybody Active page @ www.physicalactivitystrategy.ca.