

SPORT ACTIVITIES FOR DISABLED PEOPLE IN PÄRNU

Pärnu, a city in Estonia, is home to a diverse population, including people with disabilities. Disability is a complex and multifaceted issue that affects individuals, families, and society as a whole.

The most common types of disabilities are mobility impairments, hearing and vision impairments, and intellectual disabilities. Despite the efforts to promote accessibility, many public spaces, buildings, and transportation systems in Pärnu are still not fully accessible to people with disabilities.

The Psychiatry Day Center in Pärnu has been operating for a total of 23 years. The Day Center was established in Pärnu almost at the same time as the psychiatric clinic was established.

Different services are provided to a total of about 110 people with special mental needs from the age of 18. Some clients receive several different services, depending on the particular client's need for assistance.

Different services:

- Three special welfare services are financed by the Social Insurance Board.
 - The daily life support service is the main one through which clients reach the house.
 - The supported living service is provided mainly in the client's own home.
 - The employment support service. The purpose of this service is to help a person look for a job and keep that job later.
- Support person service is ordered and financed by the city of Pärnu. The content of the service is comprehensive assistance to the client in his life arrangements and household matters, communication with authorities, payment of bills, etc.
- Day inpatient service, which is financed by the Health Fund, is constantly present at the service. The main idea of this service is to ensure the daily coping of the client in terms of mental health, to provide feedback to the client's psychiatrist in order to respond to changes in the state of health in a timely manner, in the joint work of the day center's nurses and activity supervisors. Clients for this service come usually after the end of active psychiatric hospitalization.
- Clients of the ISTE service, i.e. person-centered special care service. Basically, it is like a daily life support service, but in the big picture with somewhat wider options. Day center provides the same components as the daily life support service. This service is also organized by the Pärnu City Government through a project.

All those different support services enable people with disabilities to participate different cultural and sport activities.

Activities of the Day Center in terms of sports

In addition to mental health, there is also a great value to physical health, because one cannot exist without the other.

- From spring to autumn people with disabilities The Psychiatry Day Center have an opportunity to play disc golf every week.
- Basketball trainings for disabled people are available all year round (once in a week or two)
- Disabled people in Pärnu can play bowling all year round. Thanks to the responsiveness of the entrepreneur, they have been able to play it for free for years. The day center itself organizes a Bowling tournament, in which institutions dealing with people with special needs from all over Estonia participate.
- The annual national sports day. Every year people with different disabilities can also participate in the annual national sports day, organized by Vändra Social house (various service providers all over Estonia gather).
- In previous years they have participated in a boccia (petanque-like ball game) tournament for people with special needs in Rapla.
- Daily people with special needs also take on a walking tours during lunch.
- Participating in the „2 Bridges Race“ and walking tour in September is also very popular among people with special needs.

The role of local government in the development of sports for people with special needs:

- Pärnu City Government maps suitable conditions for people with special needs to play sports (accessibility, supporting services - these are basically available through social media)
- Gather information about different sport clubs that are ready to include people with special needs in their activities.
- Monitor which activities require some adaptations
- Financial support for teachers and coaches for taking part of special courses to apply for Trainer certificate or have some additional lessons to learn how to teach children and other people with learning difficulties or different disabilities.
- Financial support for NGO-s who organize sports competitions or other moving related events.

Pärnu City Government cooperates:

- Local Sports Association, which is an on-site executor/partner;
- Paralympic Committee- to share experiences and training opportunities at the national level;
- Pärnu County Chamber of Disabled People, an umbrella organization for disability organizations in Pärnu region.

Improving sport services for disabled people in Pärnu county

Our main partner for improving sport services in Pärnu and creating a network for all local and national organizations is Pärnu Spordiliit – the local sport coordinating organization that unites all the sports clubs in the region of Pärnu. From the beginning of year 2023 they have started many activities:

- * regular circuit trainings in the gym of Pärnu Social Center
- * workshops, lectures about healthy lifestyle and the importance of moving in a seminar organized by Pärnu County Chamber of Disabled People.
- * organizing a sports day for students with special educational needs in cooperation with a local school (ages 12-16).
- * for better coordination of sports activities for people with special needs, they have also founded a council to plan further activities.
- * supporting clubs and organizations to participate in Bowling trainings and tournaments

In addition to previous actions coordinated by the local union of sports clubs we also have some sports club who offer different training and competing activities. For example one tennis club organizes wheelchair tennis lessons and a club of people with hearing disabilities organize bowling, discgolf and novuss trainings and tournaments for locals and also for people from all over in Estonia. They also organize local championships which the Pärnu City Government helps to finance.

Most exclusive sport activity for people with physical disability is wheel-chair line-dancing, that is organized by a local line dance enthusiast and Culture Center.