

## 6.3.1 - Outreach to Diverse Underserved Populations ★

*Standard:* The agency shall proactively extend programs and services to residents who may be underserved in the community. To encourage participation in parks and recreation programs and services, agencies shall identify and address barriers that may limit access including physical, social and mental abilities and financial, geographic and cultural barriers. Financial barriers may be addressed through reduced fees and scholarships. Agencies should offer inclusionary support services to ensure access to programs and services for people of all abilities and socioeconomic status.

*Suggested Evidence of Compliance:* Identify underserved populations (provide methodology and data used for this analysis), describe specific barriers within the community that limit participation and provide examples of outreach programs and services offered by the agency to meet the needs of these populations and overcome barriers to access.

Informational reference in the *Management of Park and Recreation Agencies*, (2010), 3rd Ed., Chapter 8 – Recreation Program Planning, p. 139; Chapter 9 – Program Services and Event Management, p. 177.

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### Agency Evidence of Compliance:

The Park District strives to serve all residents and makes a special effort to identify and reach out to underserved groups including those with the following potential barriers:

a. Financial. Through 2010 Census data, the Park District of Oak Park knows that just under 6% of families (just under 1,300) in Oak Park live under the poverty level. The Park District has a scholarship program to assist these families. The Park District reaches out to the local school district and has attended school staff meetings in the past to explain the scholarship program. Additionally, the scholarship brochure<sup>1</sup> and application<sup>2</sup> were distributed through the school district's digital backpack and directly to families that are part of the school district's free and reduced lunch program. Efforts like these have led to an increase in the number of scholarships awarded in recent years as evidenced by reports<sup>3</sup> from the Park District's registration software.

- 2014 - \$32,363.00
- 2013 - \$23,176.25
- 2012 - \$9,947.50

b. Disabilities. The Park District is a member of the West Suburban Special Recreation Association (WSSRA). The Park District supports WSSRA financially<sup>4</sup>, providing a representative to serve on the Board of Directors<sup>5</sup>, and by providing park and facility

space for some of their programs. This ensures that Oak Park residents have access to WSSRA programs in their community. The current WSSRA Program Guide<sup>6</sup> shows the current program offerings (Oak Park residents are welcome to register for any WSSRA programs at locations in any community) as well as the locations of programs specifically in Oak Park<sup>7</sup>.

WSSRA also assists the Park District by providing inclusion services, from training<sup>8</sup> for Park District staff on inclusion techniques to providing trained inclusion aides when additional support is needed.

c. Geographical. Despite having a population of over 50,000, Oak Park is only 4.7 square miles and all portions of the community are served by sidewalks. Therefore, there are not the same geographical barriers that may exist in other communities. However, in order to ensure that this is the case, the Park District routinely maps out target markets to learn where program participants reside within the community<sup>9</sup>. Through this analysis, the Park District has learned that when multiple location options are available, customers tend to choose one on the same side (north or south) of Oak Park in which they reside, but that this north/south barrier does not seem to stop anyone from registering if only one location is available (there is an equal distribution throughout the community). No other geographical trends have been identified.

Additionally, the Park District has looked at the issue of equity in geographical access to parks and playgrounds<sup>10</sup>. Through investigation, it has found that there are only a few very small gaps, mostly located along the perimeter of the Village of Oak Park that are more than 0.5 miles from a park or playground.

Recent examples of research in this area were included in the Park District's 2015-2024 Comprehensive Master Plan.

#### **Documentation:**

1. [06.03.01\\_Scholarship-Brochure.pdf](#)
2. [link to Park District of Oak Park 2015 Scholarship Application on Park District website](#)
3. [06.03.01\\_Scholarship-Reports.pdf](#)
4. [06.03.01\\_2014-Payments-to-WSSRA-for-Support-and-Inclusion.pdf](#)
5. [06.03.01\\_WSSRA-Board-of-Directors-in-Program-Guide.pdf](#)
6. [06.03.01\\_WSSRA-Program-Guide.pdf](#)
7. [06.03.01\\_Oak-Park-Program-Locations-in-WSSRA-Program-Guide.pdf](#)
8. [06.03.01\\_2014-Summer-Camp-Training-with-WSSRA.pdf](#)
9. [06.03.01\\_Program-Registration-Mapping-in-Comprehensive-Master-Plan.pdf](#)
10. [06.03.01\\_Access-to-Parks-Research-in-Comprehensive-Master-Plan.pdf](#)

**Agency Self Assessment: MET**

