

Conversation Tool Kit: *For Parents of Children/Youth with Autism*

When you are considering enrolling your child into a community recreation or sport program, it can be difficult to know where to start. Here are some questions that you could ask your community recreation centre or local sports club:

- **What are the goals of your program?**

If the program is heavily focused on developing competitive talent, it might not be the best start for your child. It might be best to start with programs where the emphasis is on fun, participation, and physical activity.

- **Does your program allow for an individualized pace of skill development?**

Your child will benefit from a program where coaches are ready to adapt skills to ensure that each participant is appropriately challenged, and the leaders expect a variety of skill levels within the program.

- **Are you open to having an extra set of hands to support my son/daughter?**

Depending on how things go, your son/daughter might benefit from a bit of extra support to stay focused. This could come in the form of a student volunteer, a support worker, a sibling, a neighbor, or a junior coach. If the coach or program leaders are open to an extra body, you have that option available to you should it become necessary.

- **Have you had children with autism in your program before? Do any of your staff/volunteers have autism training or related experience?**

This question can help the coach/activity leader to match your child with programs that will best set them up for success. It can also give you an idea of whether or not the sports club might have a 'champion' who is willing to support your child's inclusion. Remember that Canucks Autism Network has online resources for coaches and community leaders (such as visual supports, webinars about autism, etc.) that you can share as well.

- **Can I share one or two strategies that will help my child learn best/be successful?**

Give the coach/activity leader some information up front that will set your child up for success. Asking this question will also give you the opportunity to engage how open the coach/activity leader is to collaboration.

