



INCLUSIVE & ACCESSIBLE PROGRAMMING

Park Board: April 16, 2026

Staff Presenter: Allison Smith, Deputy Director of Recreation



PURPOSE

- Provide an overview of current Recreation efforts to support individuals with disabilities and special needs
- Share progress on cross-department and community collaboration
- Outline next steps toward improved accessibility and inclusion

CURRENT INCLUSIVE PROGRAMS & ACCOMMODATIONS

• The Recreation Department currently offers a growing range of inclusive programs and event accommodations, including:

- **Designated Special Needs Egg Hunt** at Bunny Daze
- **Respite Area** at Boo Bash
- **Partner Events with the Center for ASD**
 - Light Up the Night
 - Dance Events
 - NEW Swim Event at the Indoor Pool
- **Sensory Hours at the Splash Pad**
- **Programs for Individuals with Different Abilities**
- **Sensory-Friendly Family Nights** at the BRiCk
- **Weekly Partnership with Burleson ISD Adult Transition Students** at Russell Farm (Fridays)
- **New Addition (2026): Sensory Time at the Aqua Egg Hunt**
 - Implemented directly in response to recent participant feedback

LISTENING & ADAPTING



- Community feedback continues to guide improvements
- Sensory Time at the Aqua Egg Hunt is a direct example of responsive programming
- Ongoing goal: Proactively identify needs while maintaining a willingness to adapt

SPECIAL NEEDS COHORT - OVERVIEW

To strengthen collaboration and consistency, the department implemented a Special Needs Cohort.

Cohort Members Include:

- Burleson Recreation Department
- Center for ASD Representative
- BISD Special Education Coordinator

New Additions:

- Tina Michael, City of Burleson Disability Advocate
- Cheryl Marthiljohni, Director of Human Resources

Invitations Extended To:

- Burleson Independent Soccer Association (BISA)
- Burleson Youth Athletics (BYA)

Cohort Meetings

- October 28 – Initial alignment and introductions
- March 5 – Deeper discussion on current programming and collaboration
- Next Meeting Date: April 23

COHORT PURPOSE

To bring together key organizations, departments, and advocates to:

- Align on shared goals
- Identify service gaps
- Explore collaboration opportunities
- Improve inclusive and accessible city programming for individuals with disabilities



WHAT'S NEXT

Next Meeting - April 23:

- Review all Recreation programs and events
- Identify gaps, needed changes, or new opportunities

Then:

- Bring recommendations forward to the Advisory Committee on People with Disabilities for review and discussion

Followed By:

- Update brought back to Park Board

Final Step:

- Present finalized recommendations to City Council



QUESTIONS

