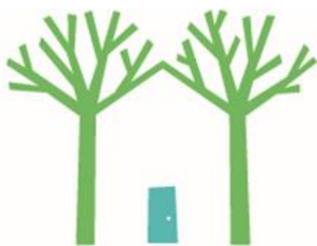


# EVALUATION OF FJC RUDERMAN/ALEXANDER INCLUSION INITIATIVE

Summer 2015



**FOUNDATION FOR JEWISH CAMP**  
Ruderman/Alexander Inclusion Initiative



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A comprehensive version of this report with complete methodology, data analysis, and discussion was developed and provided to Lisa Tobin.

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# Executive Summary

A carefully selected group of six overnight Jewish camps (B'nai B'rith Camp, Camp Chi, Camp Judaea, CYJ Texas, JCA Shalom, URJ Harlam) formed the initial 2015 cohort for the Ruderman/Alexander inclusion initiative. Under the leadership of Lisa Tobin, FJC's Director of Disabilities Initiatives, these camps set out to include children and youth of varying abilities. It is important to note that these camps applied to be part of this cohort out of their genuine desire to create an inclusive culture at camp. This FJC initiative was an intentional effort to provide resources and training to help camps welcome and accommodate campers with more significant disabilities in a systematic and sustainable manner.

The InFocus evaluation team (Schleien, Miller, Walton, & Roth) set out to conduct a comprehensive and longitudinal evaluation of these efforts. A series of quantitative (staff and parent surveys) and qualitative (telephone interviews and focus groups with senior staff and inclusion coordinators) evaluation methods were used in order to help us dig deeply into current camp practices being implemented. In this manner, practices currently used to include campers with and without disabilities could be identified, described, and evaluated regarding their effectiveness. Additionally, shortfalls and obstacles that interfered with efforts to fully include campers with disabilities could be identified and addressed. By focusing on those camps that are performing at statistically higher levels in a given area (e.g., staff training and preparation), best practices could be depicted so that they may be replicated across other sites. This evaluation also enabled us to identify components of camp where more attention may need to be devoted (e.g., specific staff roles having a more difficult time than others in support of inclusive practices may require increased training). These evaluative efforts and progress toward creating an inclusive camp culture would not have been possible without the sincere and ongoing efforts and support of senior staff, inclusion coordinators, other camp staff (unit heads, counselors, activity specialists), and family members of each camp

In order to grasp and define inclusive camp practices, myriad evaluative methods were used to study nearly every facet of the summer camp process. The research team's knowledge of the community inclusion process, along with the implementation of several complementary data collection instruments, helped us target key staff members to identify and evaluate camp practices that were implemented during Summer 2015. Several of these salient components included: marketing inclusive camps, recruiting campers with and without disabilities, assessing campers prior to the start of camp, hiring and training staff, preparing campers for inclusion, facilitating an inclusive camp culture, implementing accommodations and other programmatic strategies, addressing challenging camper behaviors, and planning to sustain these efforts. Additionally, because the inclusion coordinator at each camp played a significant role in the facilitation of inclusion, substantial efforts were made to assess the roles, activities, and effectiveness of these well-trained, full-time, professionals.

Through telephone interviews and focus groups with senior staff and inclusion coordinators, a comprehensive camp staff survey, and access to relevant items of the *Camper Satisfaction Insights* survey, key findings are highlighted here. The desire of senior staff and inclusion coordinators to provide an inclusive camp experience for campers of varying abilities was clearly stated during the telephone

interviews and focus groups. Knowing this, it must be kept in mind that several of these findings are a reflection of how the staff felt about certain matters, rather than a measure of how successful inclusion efforts may have been from the perspectives of camp leadership and camper outcomes.

- We are pleased to report that all six camps are experiencing an emerging culture of inclusion. These overwhelmingly positive results are due to senior staff buying into an inclusive culture and the preparation and implementation of practices in support of inclusive camp.
- As expected, camp staff are young, with 92% of them 23 years of age or younger. Many of them, who were recently campers themselves, lack many life experiences and are still maturing developmentally. They take on a great deal of responsibility throughout the summer months and need to be well prepared for inclusive camp. Many staff members reported being overloaded with myriad responsibilities, including the need to administer behavior management strategies with a wide range of campers with and without labels; this made it difficult to facilitate the social inclusion of all campers who were marginalized.
- Camp staff with previous experience with people with disabilities—as family members, volunteers, employees—were better prepared and had a stronger foundation in support of inclusive camp. They may have been more receptive to training and support and to serving campers with disabilities. The results indicated that they may have enjoyed the inclusive experience more, and were more likely to return to an inclusive camp. However, staff members without prior experience with people with disabilities, but having good general camp experience, also made accommodations and, they too, were open-minded toward inclusive camp. In support of staff with either disability or general camp experience, these findings could inform future hiring practices. Perhaps a good balance between these two types of staff members is worthy of consideration in future hiring.
- Staff members struggled with the understanding and implementation of accommodations and supports for all campers, and instead attempted to address specific diagnostic labels. The struggle between proactively designing an inclusive environment for “equitable” participation (i.e., where campers are accommodated in individualized ways and provided opportunities to participate in activities with modifications), rather than reactively addressing camper problems once they occur for “identical” participation (i.e., where staff insist upon all campers participating in the same way), is interspersed throughout nearly every aspect of camp (e.g., language used by camp staff, intake process, staff training, roles of inclusion coordinator).
- Activity specialists (as compared to other staff members) were not as well-prepared to accommodate campers with disabilities in their programs and activities. In fact, most camp staff desired additional training prior to camp commencement. Staff members require more extensive training on camper supports and accommodations, and how to facilitate inclusion, rather than on disability labels and characteristics. They generally bought into the idea of inclusive camp and assisting all campers, but some struggled in its application.
- A large majority of campers were unprepared for the inclusive experience prior to the start of camp. More attention was needed in preparing bunks and entire units for inclusion.

- Inclusion coordinators were well trained in many areas and prepared to support campers with disabilities as well as the staff. They provided substantial support to many staff positions, and particularly to the unit heads. Of all staff members, unit heads felt the most prepared and supported to facilitate inclusion. Counselors and activity specialists desired greater access to the inclusion coordinators. In fact, many staff members requested additional support and training to become more knowledgeable and skilled to function independently of the inclusion coordinator. This could free up inclusion coordinator time to engage in additional facilitation of social inclusion and contribute to the sustainability of the inclusion initiative.
- Camps are considered physically inaccessible by most senior staff, and they would have difficulty accommodating many campers with physical disabilities.
- Evaluative data concerning camper and social inclusion outcomes were not collected during or after the summer season. However, nearly 94% of camp staff believed that campers with disabilities added value to camp, and 96% believed that campers with disabilities should be included at camp in future summers. Likewise, through the *Camper Satisfaction Insights* survey, parents of campers with and without disabilities expressed strong support for inclusive camp.
- Senior staff require additional strategies to sustain and grow their inclusion efforts, since they perceive limited financial resources and current staffing levels that are insufficient.

There are many impressive qualities already in place at the six camps in this cohort and within the overall FJC inclusive camp initiative. An emerging culture of inclusion and senior staff buy-in to this initiative, along with the presence of a highly skilled set of inclusion coordinators, serve as a strong foundation to move forward. Also, camp staff are attracted to the inclusion concept and most prefer to work in this type of setting rather than at a camp that does not welcome children of varying abilities. Moreover, the competent and effective leadership provided by Ms. Lisa Tobin, Director of this initiative, will help ensure that the Ruderman and Alexander Foundations will meet their goals to advocate for and enhance the inclusion of people with disabilities throughout the Jewish community.

# Background

## Inclusive Summer Camp

FJC's established definition of an inclusive camp formed the philosophical foundation for the evaluation protocols and data analyses. As stated in *The Inclusion Training Guide for Jewish Summer Camp* (Tobin & Blas, 2015)<sup>1</sup>:

*"Inclusion of children with disabilities at camp is the participation of such campers to the greatest possible extent in the full experience of a regular camp setting alongside their peers. Campers with and without disabilities do all camp activities together, live together and eat together, with no separation. The inclusive camp or program is structured to allow all campers to live and participate together while receiving appropriate support and services based on their individual needs. Behavioral support and accommodations are incorporated into daily living, oftentimes under the guidance of an inclusion coordinator. The inclusion coordinator works closely with all staff to collectively provide and implement necessary accommodations and programmatic changes to achieve success for each camper." (pp. 15-16)*

## Inclusive Camping Vision Statement by Foundation for Jewish Camp with Disabilities (by Lisa Tobin)

One of the key teachings in the Torah is that each human being is created *B'Tzelem Elohim* – in the Divine image. Jewish camp is a sacred community which, as a rule, has always been willing to find common ground in respecting and accommodating individual values and needs. The values and needs of campers with disabilities should not be an exception. The 24/7, joyous environment of summer camp builds Jewish identity, strengthens the Jewish community, and fosters Jewish leadership. The Foundation for Jewish Camp is committed to ensuring that every Jewish child—regardless of ability—is able to experience joyous Jewish summers.

Fourteen percent of children in North America are defined as having disabilities, and the percentage is even larger when those with physical disabilities are included. However, in 2012, campers with disabilities represented only 10% of overall Jewish overnight campers. Based on feedback from families of children with disabilities, advocacy groups, and camp professionals in 2013, FJC engaged in a research project with Laszlo Strategies in 2013, the first of its kind in the Jewish community.

The results guided FJC to envision a future where campers with disabilities and their families would experience camp as fully and completely as their neurotypical peers. Our ultimate goal is for children with disabilities to comprise at least 10% of the total camper population at Jewish camp across North America. Our intention is to serve children with complex disabilities as well as behavioral disabilities.

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<sup>1</sup> Tobin, L., & Blas, H. (2015). *Inclusion training guide for Jewish summer camps*. New York, NY: Foundation for Jewish Camp.

Based on our research, and in consultation with experts, we believe that this goal is ambitious but achievable. FJC's strategy focuses on three distinct but overlapping areas:

- Staffing and Training
- Physical Accessibility
- Vocational and Life Skills Training Programs

To achieve these lofty goals, an investment of this magnitude should begin first and foremost with a training initiative that enables camps to ready themselves to serve campers in an effective way and to ensure that they will benefit from a successful, meaningful, and fun summer experience.

FJC aims to make it possible for camps at different stages of readiness to become involved in the disabilities enterprise and recognizes the ability to include more children with disabilities will require not only training, but more accessible bunks and facilities. This will be achievable only with significant investments of time and money by philanthropists, federations, and camp communities. FJC is keenly aware that Jewish children with disabilities have been underserved by the field of Jewish camp. As a research and data-driven organization, with a reputation for delivering programs of excellence that elevate the field of Jewish camp, FJC will continue to will broaden access to Jewish summer experiences for all Jewish children.

The FJC Ruderman/Alexander Inclusion Initiative has allowed FJC to focus on staffing and training, paired with an advocacy awareness campaign. FJC began work with a cohort of six camps across the U.S. Each camp hired an inclusion coordinator who would be present at camp in the summer on a full-time basis and on a part-time basis during the year in order to work with staff, parents, and conduct proper intakes. FJC provided training for each camp's leadership team—director, assistant director, and inclusion coordinator—with a focus on universal design, developing strategies to manage camper behaviors, preparing inclusive environments, and cooperative learning strategies for all campers. Each camp receives support from a mentor. A community of practice (CoP) was also put into place to further support these inclusion coordinators along with others across the field. Topic-based webinars and camp-specific projects are an integral part of the CoP.

An important aspect of this initiative is to assess the administrative and programmatic processes used to create and sustain an inclusive summer camp model, so that camp staff and campers alike are supported toward the goal of socially inclusive camping. To better achieve this, FJC contracted with the InFocus research team to conduct a 3-year longitudinal study to examine inclusive camp processes and camper outcomes. With the support of this research, camps will be able to make course corrections and develop best practices. The ultimate goal of the research will be to identify best practices at all levels of the camp environment that can be used to create successful and scalable inclusion models across Jewish camps.

## **Purpose of the Evaluation**

This comprehensive evaluation assesses the processes currently used to create, implement, and sustain the inclusive Jewish camp experience in overnight camp. Results from Summer 2015, and this 3-year

longitudinal evaluation, will help identify best practices at administrative, staff, programmatic, and camper-parent levels that will result in inclusive and sustainable camp practices. Additionally, shortfalls and obstacles that are interfering with the full inclusion of campers with disabilities have begun to be identified. Based on our evaluation and recommendations, it is our hope that the FJC will reach their goals to facilitate a community of practice where inclusion is the priority in the field of Jewish camp and make it possible for children of varying abilities to participate in immersive, joyous Jewish summer experiences.

# Methodology

A mixed method evaluation approach was used, combining the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data across multiple data sources. Data were collected through telephone interviews, surveys, and focus groups, along with a review of camper data. Sources of data included senior staff, inclusion coordinators, counselors, unit heads, one-on-one supports for campers with disabilities, and activity specialists. While limited in nature, data from parents' perspectives were also assessed and included in the data analysis. Triangulation of data provided a rich and vivid image of the first year of the initiative.

Participants of this evaluation were representative staff (depending on the data collection method) from the six camps comprising the cohort of the inclusion initiative: B'nai B'rith Camp, Neotsu, OR; Camp JCA Shalom, Malibu, CA; Camp Judaea, Hendersonville, NC; Camp Young Judaea Texas, Wimberley, TX; JCC Camp Chi, Wisconsin Dells, WI; and URJ Camp Harlam, Kunkletown, PA. The name of each camp, its location, and a statement regarding the types of disabilities that they served as outlined by *The Inclusion Training Guide for Jewish Camp*, appears within Appendix Table 1.

## Telephone Interviews

Twelve telephone interviews were conducted by the evaluation team over a 3-week period in July/August 2015. One semi-structured interview was conducted with a senior staff member (director, associate/assistant director) at each of the 6 camps in the cohort, and the other semi-structured interview directed the interview with the inclusion coordinator at each camp (see Appendix for a copy of each semi-structured interview guide). Two InFocus team members reviewed the interview notes and gleaned pertinent information relative to the questions asked of these 12 full-time staff across the six camps in the cohort. Interviewee data were analyzed using constant comparative methods which allowed common phenomena ("camp practices") to be identified across camps.

## Camp Staff Survey

The Camp Staff Survey collected information in four major areas: training and preparation for role in camp and for inclusion, support that staff received from their respective inclusion coordinator, personal perspectives on inclusion, and demographics. Statements of agreement in the "Training and Preparation" and "Support from Inclusion Coordinator" sections were asked using a six-point Likert scale, ranging from

1-“strongly disagree” to 6-“strongly agree.” For these Likert scale questions, a “not applicable” (N/A) option was also provided. The same Likert scale, but without the N/A option, was provided as response options in the “Personal Perspectives” section. Additional open-ended questions were also contained in each primary area. A copy of the Camp Staff Survey appears in the Appendix.

## Camper Satisfaction Insights

Three questions from the 2015 *Camper Satisfaction Insights* (CSI) were deemed relevant to this evaluation of the inclusion initiative. Camper families from all 75 camps participating in the CSI were asked to indicate whether their child, or at least one of their children that attended camp this past summer, had a “disability/special needs,” and to rank their level of satisfaction with the camp’s willingness and success in addressing their child’s special need. One CSI item unique to the six camps in the inclusion initiative questioned how parents viewed the inclusion initiative.

## Focus Groups

As a means of gathering evaluation information of a summative nature, focus groups were conducted in October 2015, following the summer camp season. Co-facilitated by Dr. Schleien and Ms. Tobin, two focus groups were conducted; the first with 12 senior staff, and the second with the 6 inclusion coordinators of the cohort. Questions used to guide these focus groups are presented in the Appendix. Although the focus groups were conducted separately, with senior staff and inclusion coordinators in different groups, the results are presented together, to further protect anonymity and to represent common themes that emerged from these two engaging discussions.

# Findings - Campers Served

To understand the campers that were served through this initiative, it is important to establish a definition of disability. FJC established the following definition of a camper with a disability when collecting camper participation data from camps:

*These are intellectual or developmental disabilities and physical impairments, such as autism spectrum disorder/Asperger's, blindness, Down syndrome, hearing impairments, and seizures. Do not include ADHD campers if the camper functions independently and/or solely because the camper receives medications. Include ADHD campers only if they require extra staff support or accommodations to be successful at camp. Do not include food allergies or special diets as disabilities.*

Lisa Tobin, FJC Director of Disabilities Initiatives, served as the liaison between camps and the evaluation team for the collection of camper data. Camps were asked to provide the total number of campers with and without disabilities that were served throughout the summer, as well as the total number of campers served throughout the summer that needed supports, but who did not meet the FJC definition of disability. For campers with disabilities that met the FJC definition of disability, FJC asked them to

provide a detailed list of campers, including the session the camper attended, the grade they were entering, whether they were a new or returning camper, and their disability label.

Natural proportions as a target (i.e., no more than 15% of all campers having a disability) has been identified as a best practice toward success of an inclusive program or service delivery system. The six camps in the inclusion initiative cohort served a total of 4,851 campers, 203 of whom met the FJC definition of having a disability (see Appendix Table 2). Campers with disabilities comprised 4.2% of the total camper population. However, there was a great deal of variance in the percentage that campers with disabilities represented based on which camp was observed. While campers with disabilities made up 12.1% of the camper population at Camp Judaea, they comprised only 1.7% of the population at Camp Chi.

Over 200 campers with disabilities were served in the initiative, comprising 4.2% of the camper population at the six camps in the inclusion cohort

Senior staff and inclusion facilitators consistently indicated that campers without disability labels, and who did not meet the FJC definition, were often the most difficult and time-consuming to serve. For those camps that were able to capture these data, we also collected information on the campers who did not meet the FJC definition, yet required additional supports in order to be successful at camp. The number of campers with support needs (including those with disabilities meeting the FJC definition and those who did not) was somewhat staggering. For example, Camp Harlam reported that 20% of their campers required some form of support, while Camp Judaea senior staff indicated that 25.2% of their campers required special support (see Appendix Table 2).

If all campers who needed additional supports from staff were considered, and not just those campers with disability labels recognized by FJC, the percentage of campers needing inclusion support was as high as 25.2%

Data were also gathered to determine what percentage of campers with disabilities (those meeting the FJC definition) were returning campers (i.e., campers that the camp had served in prior year) versus how many were new to the camp. Of the 203 campers with disabilities across the six camps, 49.8% of them were new to camp suggesting that the camps and FJC made a strong effort to recruit campers with disabilities (see Appendix Table 3). Again, there existed great variance in these numbers across camps. While 78.6% of CYJ Texas' campers with disabilities were attending the camp for the first time, only 34.8% of Camp Chi's were new.

49.8% of campers with disabilities were new to the camp that served them

A wide variety of disabilities were served by these camps. Given that 1 in 68 children are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, it is not surprising that a large proportion of campers with disabilities had this diagnosis.

## Findings – Practices Used

Six primary themes were validated in the interview data (i.e., marketing of inclusive camp, intake process, roles of inclusion coordinator, hiring and training staff, camper outcomes, growth and sustainability). The evaluators noted an emerging cultural shift in all of these camps, although they were at various stages of development in their evolution into an inclusive service delivery system. Within a particular camp, staff may have performed in an exemplary way in one particular area (e.g., a training protocol that effectively prepared staff to address campers' challenging behavior). However, they may need to further develop another facet of their inclusive camp initiative (e.g., hiring and training staff where current hiring strategies have not yielded a camp staff who have “bought in” to an inclusive camp culture).

The evaluators noted an emerging cultural shift of inclusiveness among all camps

### Marketing of Inclusive Camp

The most prevalent approach to marketing was through “word-of-mouth,” due in large part to the camps' late notification of funding for this initiative. Additionally, local community partners and congregations were utilized to share information and recruit campers. One camp sent out a letter and newsletter early on, explaining the initiative. Several mentioned using an FJC press release template. A lack of inclusion information on the camp's website appears to be a common issue across FJC camps, as only 30% of camp directors responding in the Laszlo report (2013)<sup>2</sup> indicated that their website contained information about programs and services for campers with disabilities.

### Intake Process

A senior staff member or the inclusion coordinator completed the initial review of applicants. The intake process varied between camps, though each camp followed an extensive protocol. This process may

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<sup>2</sup> Laszlo Strategies. (2013). *Jewish camping for children with disabilities/special needs*. Bethesda, MD: Laszlo Strategies.

have included telephone contact with parents, home visits, and requests for additional information from private professionals. Home visits were more likely to occur if the camper lived in close proximity to camp.

## Roles of Inclusion Coordinator

The evaluation team was impressed by the level of expertise that the newly hired, full-time, inclusion coordinators brought to the initiative. Their backgrounds included special education, applied behavioral analysis, and social work. A few also had master's degrees. Furthermore, all had extensive experience with supporting individuals with disabilities in summer camp environments.

Inclusion coordinators had expertise and training that prepared them well for supporting and including campers with disabilities

The roles of the inclusion coordinator varied between camps, but were generally consistent with the most prevalent roles identified as being fulfilled by inclusion coordinators at inclusive camps in the Laszlo report (2013). All inclusion coordinators had a role in the intake process, which included identifying supports needed, counselor matching and cabin assignment for some campers. In one model, the inclusion coordinator was part of a team and involved in the review of daily camper reports. In this model, other team members, as well as the inclusion coordinator, were available to address specific support needs of campers. One inclusion coordinator supported and helped design a "Community Inclusion Day" with campers and counselors in training.

Inclusion coordinators had specific roles in all staff training, all family communication, and the development and implementation of behavior plans, necessarily taking away from the time that could be spent facilitating social inclusion. The inclusion coordinator found herself spending a disproportionate amount of time with particular campers, especially those campers without labels who required special supports. Also, some inclusion coordinators spent large amounts of time speaking with parents on the telephone, or via email, throughout the camp session to simply update them on the status of their respective children. The Laszlo report (2013) found that 41% of camps were communicating with parents of campers with disabilities on a weekly basis and 14% were communicating daily. This appears to be a common phenomenon across camps. A policy to address communication with family members may be necessary to free-up valuable inclusion coordinator time.

The inclusion coordinator spent a disproportionate amount of time with particular campers, especially those campers without disability labels who required special supports

Planning and implementation of behavioral strategies consumed a great deal of the inclusion coordinator's time, more so when the inclusion coordinator was not functioning as part of a team. Strategies included the use of visuals, sensory toys, social stories, 1-on-1 supports, break spots or sensory rooms, and visual behavior cards. Some strategies were incorporated by the staff as success tools for all campers (e.g., using a visual "schedule of the day").

Planning and implementation of behavioral strategies consumed a great deal of the inclusion coordinator's time

The inclusion coordinators worked well with counselors, empowering them to make accommodations as needed. Applying various strategies to support campers freed up time for the inclusion coordinator to address other concerns. The inclusion coordinators identified rigidity in scheduling, either as a counselor's interpretation of camp routine and being fair to other campers, or as a camp expectation, as a barrier to accommodation. The inclusion coordinators who encouraged counselors to make accommodations for campers found that schedule revisions, for example, led to not having as many issues arise in the first place. However, camp schedules were not always flexible in meeting all campers' needs. Some inclusion coordinators reported offering specific times for regular debriefing and coaching sessions with staff. Additionally, information was shared through Camp Minder software, though only to varying degrees and only with specific staff (e.g., in one camp only the unit heads had direct access to Camp Minder).

Rigidity of camp schedules and focus on traditional camp activities may be serving as significant barriers to inclusion

## Hiring and Training Staff

Certain qualities of job applicants were identified: patience, understanding, resiliency, sensitivity, and caring. Other skills, such as programmatic and disability experience, were not mentioned. One camp provided required reading prior to the interview process. Other camps added a question about attitude pertaining to disability. Two camps had access to staff from local segregated camp settings.

There was a discrepancy in the amount and type of training within and between camps. Each camp provided some training to all staff. There was a greater emphasis placed on training regarding "disability supports" rather than "supporting inclusive camp."

Some camps offered different models of supports based on counselor training and potential to create an inclusive culture. Where one-on-one support personnel were used, they were paid more and received

more training. It is not clear, however, whether these support personnel worked cooperatively with other counselors to provide support and facilitate inclusion.

All camps expressed a need for more training on behavior management and inclusion strategies. There was mention of using the FJC "Inclusion Guide." Special training at some camps was provided to counselors working specifically with campers with disabilities.

All camps expressed a need for more training on behavior management and inclusion strategies

## Camper Outcomes

While it was reported that peers were naturally welcoming, goals toward social inclusion were not always met. Buddy systems and cooperative learning strategies in support of inclusion were not described. It may be of interest to note that 44% of camps surveyed in the Laszlo report (2013) indicated that they were using peer companion or buddy systems as an inclusion accommodation. Overall, peers without disabilities were not well prepared for an inclusive experience. The lack of preparation of campers without disabilities appears to be consistent across inclusive camps, as the Laszlo report (2013) indicated that only 10% of camps prepared peers without disabilities who were sharing a cabin with a child with a disability. Given that the preparation of peers is identified as a best practice, this should be studied further.

Many campers without disabilities were unprepared for an inclusive summer experience

Some camps discussed with campers the many similarities and differences across individuals and reasons to be accepting of one another. Self-advocacy, such as a camper describing one's disability to his or her peers, was supported at camp with reports of a positive impact on campers and entire bunks. Interviewees reported genuine caring, friendships, expanded repertoires, and improved social skills.

Evaluation data were not collected to describe specific camper outcomes.

## Growth and Sustainability

Although they saw value in an inclusive camp, respondents expressed concern about the ability to sustain such a camp with limited financial resources and current staffing levels. Additionally, board members of some camps expressed concern to senior staff about potentially negative changes in the camp experience for their own children and other campers. One camp suggested that families whose camper requires individualized support may need to provide private pay for this accommodation.

Senior staff and inclusion coordinators expressed concern about the ability to sustain an inclusive camp with limited resources and current staffing levels

# Findings - Camp Staff Survey

## Demographics

The Camp Staff Survey was completed by 522 staff members (49% response rate) across the six camps (see Appendix Figure 1 for individual camp representation within the data). Respondents represented a variety of roles at their respective camps (see Appendix Figure 2). Survey options included one-on-one support to a camper with a disability, counselor, unit head, activity specialist, and "other" with an opportunity to provide an explanation. Most respondents who identified as "other" were collapsed into new categories. For example, those identifying as director, assistant director, supervisor, program coordinator, program manager, logistics, office manager, nurse, etc., were combined under a category of senior staff. In addition, a number of respondents indicated that they served as both counselor and activity specialist. These individuals were combined into a new category labeled as counselor/activity specialist. The identification of this combined role of counselor/activity specialist proved important when analyzing how respondents in different roles perceived the inclusion initiative, as will be evident as data are presented throughout this report. As to be expected, the largest number of respondents identified themselves as counselors (52%, n=273). Activity specialists represented the next largest role cohort (20%, n=104). The remaining respondents included 54 counselor/activity specialists (10%), 44 unit heads (9%), 26 senior staff (5%), 14 one-on-one supports to campers with disabilities (3%), and 7 others (1%; e.g., photographer, maintenance, kitchen manager, nanny).

Respondents were also asked whether they were 18 years of age or under, 19-23 years of age, 24-35 years of age, or over the age of 35. The majority of respondents (92%) were under the age of 24, with 55% being 19-23 years of age, and 37% being 18 years of age or younger (see Appendix Figure 3).

92% of camp staff were 23 years of age or younger

The respondents were also asked to indicate whether they had worked with a camper with a disability in their bunk/unit/activity/other. Seventy-four percent (74%, n=382) of respondents (N=516) indicated that they had worked with a camper with a disability during camp.

The final component of demographic information collected from camp staff addressed whether they had any prior experience with a person with a disability. The majority of camp staff (86%) had prior experience with individuals with disabilities in some capacity (see Appendix Figure 4).

86% of camp staff had prior experience with individuals with disabilities in some capacity

## A. Training and Preparation for Role and Inclusion

As can be seen in Appendix Figure 5, respondents were very positive regarding the training and preparation that they received at camp. Over 90% of camp staff agreed that they were prepared for their role. Eighty-seven percent (87%) agreed that they were prepared to include campers with disabilities, while 86% agreed that they were prepared to work with campers with challenging behaviors. Despite this, one area where improvement is needed was clearly evident. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of camp staff disagreed that they were prepared to work with specific campers with disabilities that were assigned to them.

91% of camp staff felt prepared for their role, but 27% of camp staff did not feel prepared to work with specific campers with disabilities assigned to them

The Camp Staff Survey also included an open-ended question that asked respondents, "What additional training do you wish you had received?" A number of themes emanated from the responses that provided additional insights regarding staff training needs and/or further validating the quantitative data collected. Prominent themes, in order of prevalence included, a desire for more training specific to addressing challenging behaviors, receiving information ahead of time regarding specific campers, additional training on specific disabilities, and how to facilitate inclusion. Several camp staff were focused on a need for training related to disability labels versus how to accommodate campers in general. Additionally, some staff desired equivalent training on inclusion and working with campers with disabilities that had only been available to specific staff.

### Staff desired:

- more training to address challenging behaviors
- more information about specific campers ahead of time
- more strategies for facilitating inclusion

Many respondents referred to a desire to receive training that had only been received by certain staff members and not the broader camp staff

For each question differences across staff roles were also explored.

### Camp Prepared Me for My Role

Those who identified as “other” felt most prepared for their role at camp, followed closely by one-on-one supports to campers with disabilities and those in senior staff positions (see Appendix Figure 6). Those filling the dual role of counselor/activity specialist felt least prepared for their role in an inclusive camp. No statistically significant differences between roles were discovered.

### Camp Prepared Me to Include Campers with Disabilities

Activity specialists possessed the lowest mean scores concerning feeling prepared to include campers with disabilities, while one-on-one supports to campers with disabilities and unit heads yielded the highest mean scores (see Appendix Figure 7). Unit heads and counselors were more likely to feel prepared for inclusion than activity specialists.

One-on-one support staff and unit heads felt the most prepared, with activity specialists feeling the least prepared for inclusion

### Camp Prepared Me to Work with Campers with Challenging Behaviors

While being prepared to work with campers with challenging behaviors was of concern to all camp staff roles, differences were found across the different types of staff (see Appendix Figure 8). Unit heads across all camps reported feeling the most prepared to serve campers with challenging behaviors. To the contrary, activity specialists were least prepared. In statistical comparisons, counselors and unit heads were more likely to feel prepared to work with campers with challenging behaviors as compared to activity specialists.

Unit heads across all camps felt the most prepared to address challenging behaviors; activity specialists were least prepared

## Camp Prepared Me for Specific Campers Assigned to Me

Appendix Figure 9 reveals many differences across staff roles regarding the preparation they received for specific campers that were part of their assignment. One-on-one supports to campers with disabilities felt best prepared to serve specific campers assigned to them. Activity specialists were least prepared. When using statistical significance to determine differences across roles, unit heads, counselors, and one-on-one supports were more likely to agree that they were prepared for specific children with disabilities assigned to them as compared to activity specialists.

## I Had the Skills and Knowledge I Needed to Include Campers with Disabilities

Although activity specialists felt least prepared for inclusion across all camps, this does not imply that they lacked the necessary skills and knowledge to accomplish this. While believing they were not as skilled or knowledgeable as one-on-one support personnel, senior staff, or unit heads, activity specialists stated that they were relatively competent in serving campers with disabilities (see Appendix Figure 10). However, it became clear through observation of the data that those staff fulfilling the dual role of counselor/activity specialist felt the least prepared to include campers with disabilities.

## B. Support from Inclusion Coordinator

As is evident in Appendix Figure 11, camp staff were overwhelmingly positive regarding the support they received from the inclusion coordinator at their respective camp. Nearly 95% of the respondents agreed that they received the support they needed to include campers with disabilities and to respond to challenging behavior. They also noted the inclusion coordinator was readily available.

Camp staff were overwhelmingly positive regarding the support they received from the inclusion coordinator at their respective camps

An overwhelming number of respondents praised the work of the inclusion coordinator at their respective camp. Inclusion coordinators were described as highly trained professionals, responsive and timely, and supportive of campers and staff in need. The primary reasons for seeking the support of the inclusion coordinator concerned assistance with issues related to behavior management and aggressive behavior, and particularly, to assist campers with autism. Also, frequently identified supports requested by staff were for help in developing camper accommodations in support of inclusion.

The primary reasons for seeking the support of the inclusion coordinator concerned assistance with issues related to behavior management and to address behaviors specific to autism

Three themes emerged that addressed the additional assistance camp staff wished to receive from inclusion coordinators. Although the inclusion coordinator was perceived as readily available, counselors and activity specialists often expressed frustration with being left out of the communication loop and a desire for additional training. As it concerned training, it became clear that camp staff desired to be empowered by having the knowledge and skills necessary to function independently of the inclusion coordinator.

Camp staff desired to be empowered by having the knowledge and skills necessary to function independently of the inclusion coordinator; perhaps a positive note regarding sustainability of effort

### The Inclusion Coordinator Helped Me Include a Camper with a Disability if I Needed Assistance

One-on-one support staff to campers with disabilities were most positive of all staff roles regarding supports they received from the inclusion coordinator when assistance with including a camper was necessary (see Appendix Figure 12). One-on-ones were closely followed by senior staff concerning supports received. Activity specialists were statistically less likely to agree that the inclusion coordinator helped them include a camper with a disability as compared to unit heads, counselors, senior staff, and one-on-one supports.

### The Inclusion Coordinator Helped Me Respond to Challenging Behaviors

One-on-one support staff to campers with disabilities were the most positive concerning the support they received from their respective inclusion coordinators in response to challenging behaviors (see Figure 13). Activity specialists were less likely than all other staff roles, with the exception of counselors/activity specialists, to agree that the inclusion coordinator helped them respond to campers' challenging behaviors.

Camp staff who are often the youngest and have the least experience need more support

### The Inclusion Coordinator was Readily Available

As can be viewed in Appendix Figure 14, staff members across all roles found their inclusion coordinators to be readily available. Senior staff ranked the availability of the inclusion coordinators highest, followed closely by one-on-one support staff and unit heads. No statistically significant differences between roles were found on how readily available they perceived their inclusion coordinator to be.

The inclusion coordinator was readily available to staff members across all roles at camp

### C. Personal Perspectives on Inclusion

Camp staff were overwhelmingly positive about the inclusion of campers with disabilities, as can be viewed in Appendix Figure 15. Nearly 94% of all staff surveyed across camps believed that campers with disabilities added value to camp, and 96% believed that campers with disabilities should be included in the future. There are additional messages that could be extrapolated from these data. For example, it appears that while inclusion is not always easy to achieve (9.5% did not enjoy having campers with disabilities, and 11.2% would not choose to work at an inclusive camp in the future), camp staff shared a fundamental belief that inclusion should be the norm.

Nearly 94% of camp staff believed that campers with disabilities added value to camp, and 96% believed that campers with disabilities should be included in the future

#### Campers with Disabilities Added Value to Camp

One-on-one support staff to campers with disabilities strongly agreed that campers with disabilities added value to their camp (see Appendix Figure 16). Counselors and counselors/activity specialists were somewhat less positive in their opinion concerning added value, although no significant differences between roles existed.

#### Campers with Disabilities Should be Included in the Future

Statistically speaking, no differences existed between how staff in different roles across all camps felt about the inclusion of campers with disabilities in the future. Staff across roles overwhelmingly agreed that campers with disabilities should be included at camp in the future (see Appendix Figure 17).

Camp inclusion was widely valued by staff

#### I Enjoyed Having Campers with Disabilities at Camp

One-on-one supports to campers with disabilities reaped the most enjoyment through the presence of campers with disabilities (see Appendix Figure 18). Senior staff and unit heads also enjoyed including campers with disabilities. There were no statistically significant differences across roles in this regard, but counselors/activity specialists, counselors, and activity specialists were not nearly as positive in this regard, suggesting that perhaps those staff with the most contact with campers with disabilities on a daily basis, but with the least amount of training to include them, struggled with inclusive camp at times.

## I Would Choose to Work at an Inclusive Camp in the Future

One-on-one supports almost completely bought into the inclusion initiative (see Appendix Figure 19). While all positive, no other staff role stands out to the degree that one-on-one supports buy into, and wish to return to an inclusive camp in the future. However, there were no statistically significant differences across roles.

## Practices in Support of Including Campers with Disabilities

In this section of the survey, respondents were also asked to provide examples of what they had done to support campers with disabilities to feel more included in camp. The majority of these responses were generic in nature (e.g., “I included them,” “I treated them equally”). Although lacking specificity, these responses may shed some light on one important strategy that staff appeared to use, being strong role models in support of inclusion. A few respondents were able to articulate more specific inclusion strategies they implemented, such as adapting activities so that the campers of varying abilities could be more involved. While fewer in number, several responses addressed helping campers make social connections; however, little-to-no detail was provided to explain how they attempted to accomplish this.

When asked to provide examples of how they assisted campers to better understand and include a camper with a disability, respondents described how they had spoken to campers without disabilities about acceptance and including everyone. Also, staff suggested more active roles for peers in support of the inclusion of a camper with a disability (e.g., campers without disabilities encouraged by staff to find an activity that was of high interest to a fellow camper with a disability). A small number of staff members described how campers had taken it upon themselves to include a peer with a disability (e.g., some campers chose to wear a life jacket in the pool so that another camper did not stand out as being different). There were reports of campers with a disability serving as their own advocates to explain their differences to their peers and staff alike.

Sometimes, campers with disabilities served as their own advocates to explain their differences to their peers

## Experience Versus No Experience

A majority of camp staff (86%) had prior experience with individuals with disabilities (i.e., as a family member, friend, school classmate, volunteer, or paid support). As can be observed in Appendix Figure 20, there were clear differences in how those with and without previous experience responded to many of the items in the training and preparation section, and all questions pertaining to their personal perspectives on inclusive camp. As compared to those staff without any experience with people with disabilities, those with prior experience were more likely to agree that they were prepared for their camp role, include campers with disabilities, respond to challenging behavior, and possess the skills and knowledge necessary to include campers with disabilities. Similarly, those with prior experience were more likely to agree that campers with disabilities add value to camp, campers with disabilities should be

included in future summers. They enjoyed having campers with disabilities at camp and would choose to work at an inclusive camp in the future.

Staff with prior experience were more likely to agree that they were prepared for inclusion and to respond to challenging behavior, and were more likely to work in an inclusive camp in future summers

## Findings – Camper Satisfaction Insights (CSI)

### View of Inclusion Initiative

A total of 927 camper families addressed this question, including 84 (9.1%) respondents who had a camper with a disability/special need and 843 (90.1%) who did not. Overall, nearly 93% of respondents viewed the initiative favorably or had a neutral stance, leaving only 7.2% of the respondents indicating that they did not view the inclusion initiative favorably (see Appendix Figure 21). Interestingly, an equal percentage of respondents of campers with disabilities/special needs and respondents of campers without disabilities/special needs viewed the inclusion initiative unfavorably. As could be expected, more families of campers with disabilities/special needs viewed the inclusion initiative “very favorably” when compared to families of campers without disabilities/special needs (79% vs. 58%). Within the open comments section of the survey, parents of many campers with disabilities alluded to the experience as being positive for their child, their child desiring to return to camp next year, and the positive impact of inclusion on their camper.

Inclusive summer camp was widely valued by parents of campers with and without disabilities

## Findings – Post-Summer Focus Groups

Emerging themes from the focus groups included: a need to balance respect for camper privacy with the staff's need for information, an acknowledgment of the need for appropriate staff hiring and training to accommodate every camper, and the desire to create a culture of inclusion.

## **The Need for Camper Information**

There was considerable dialogue regarding the need to receive additional information from campers' parents, while respecting camper and family privacy. Focus group respondents spoke to the parental fear of rejection by the camp during the intake process, and by peers during the camp session. Parents were thought to be particularly reluctant to share mental health diagnoses; and many specifically asked that information not be shared with staff. Discussion ensued leading several to conclude that sharing a diagnosis is not always wrong, although there should be a reason or purpose for sharing any information. It was also noted that the label does not always suggest what is needed programmatically for a child. Many acknowledged that there is a need to get beyond those campers who are diagnosed, particularly since the information may not be forthcoming. There was an expressed desire to have clear policies related to the intake process, as well as exchanging information with parents during the camp session.

## **Staff Hiring and Training to Accommodate Every Camper**

There was considerable dialogue on the need for ongoing, creative training of all staff during camp. Recognizing the age of most staff (i.e., late adolescence), more interactive training was deemed appropriate, with role-playing scenarios provided as an example. The value of training as a team to address significant issues was also recommended. As an example, counselors appreciate the support and availability of seasoned professionals, if training on topics such as suicidal ideation were conducted as a team of varied staff, rather than simply other counselors.

The need to assess and provide accommodations was acknowledged during both focus group sessions. Discussion was related to preparedness for particular campers versus being prepared for all campers (i.e., universal design). Several mentioned their concern regarding neglecting the needs of "regular" campers while focusing on campers with disabilities.

**Focus group participants were concerned about their need to be prepared for specific campers versus the universal design approach of being prepared for all campers**

In accommodating camper needs, challenges exist to modifying environments. First, there is a need for staff and camper understanding of the difference between "equitable" and "identical" participation. For example, enabling a camper to participate in a highly preferred activity in a less stimulating environment rather than the scheduled activity, while still achieving camp goals, could produce a successful and equitable situation for the camper and lessen inappropriate behavior. However, staff and

other campers often perceived this as an unfair practice, since all campers did not participate in an identical manner.

## Staff and campers alike struggled with understanding the difference between “equitable” and “identical” participation

Expanding options by offering a broad range of activities, to include high interest recreational pursuits that typically appeal to campers with autism (e.g., robotics, Legos, chess), was reportedly requested by some parents. Through the recognition of individuals' interests and skills, focus group participants anticipated social benefits for campers.

There was an expressed desire to appropriately staff camps so that targeted issues, such as behavioral challenges, may receive attention. Hiring practices are being further refined to include information on attitudes about inclusion. In an effort to contain costs and provide additional supports, “floaters” were considered a viable option to provide extra eyes and hands, and to assist campers and staff as needed. These floating staff would be trained with all other staff.

### **Desire to Create a Culture of Inclusion**

The desire to create a culture of inclusion emanated throughout both focus group discussions. Occasionally referred to as a “culture of kindness,” the underlying identified barrier to achieving this camp culture was a lack of education. Education is needed across family members, board members, staff (including international staff), and campers.

Various obstacles and strategies to create a culture of inclusion were discussed. Education of camp families should be proactive. Participants addressed the need for parent buy-in of an inclusive camp for all campers. The use of educational material periodically, including a video at camp illustrating inclusion benefits for all, was believed to be a good strategy going forward. Additionally, education of parents whose children have a disability could be enhanced by attending “family camp” to introduce all family members to the camp experience prior to the child attending camp.

It was suggested that the board of each camp embrace this effort as a strategic initiative. In order to do so, each board member would need to understand the value of an inclusive camp experience for all campers. The use of lay leaders in sharing the message of inclusive camp was also suggested as an educational strategy, rather than the message always being disseminated by camp leaders. Focus group senior staff identified a concern among board members that additional staff and camper accommodations and adaptations in support of an inclusive camp could be costly and unsustainable.

Creating a culture of inclusion is also driven by camp readiness. It was noted that many of the camps are not physically accessible for individuals with mobility limitations. Furthermore, training of all staff, including the use of a common language and strategies, was deemed necessary as a foundation for an inclusive camp.

The engagement of campers themselves in discussions regarding differences was mentioned several times as a tool for educating campers about inclusion. This was seen as particularly favorable during bunk time. Offering campers ideas on how to include other campers was considered an important strategy for promoting a culture of inclusion. It was recognized that older campers might have more difficulty, due to their developmental age associated with cliques. A strategy offered for addressing this dilemma was to promote mentoring among the older campers.

There was mention of a need for staff with disabilities to serve as role models for campers and staff alike. This would send the message that "Everybody's okay and it's okay to be different." There was an expressed desire for campers to take the accrued benefits from an inclusive camp to their schools and community.

Offering campers ideas on how to include other campers was considered an important strategy for promoting a culture of inclusion

## Recommendations

Much has been learned about the administrative, programmatic, and family practices that have successfully facilitated inclusive camp. Along the way, we have also learned about the obstacles that have interfered with social inclusion and positive camper outcomes. We have taken the liberty of producing this series of 14 recommendations. We are certain that additional best practices have been used at camp although they have not been identified through this first evaluation attempt. Additional best practices will surely be implemented at these camps in the years ahead. As a research and data-driven organization, with a reputation for delivering programs of excellence, we are hopeful that these recommendations will help elevate the field of Jewish camp and assist FJC in broadening access for children of all abilities to Jewish summer camp experiences.

### The Promotion of an Inclusive Camp

*Recommendation #1: To support and sustain a culture of inclusion, remain consistent in all communication using people-first, equal, and fair language across campers, families, staff, and the broader community.*

*Recommendation #2: Advocate for inclusive camp throughout the year through the sharing of literature, social media, the web, newsletters, etc.*

The word *inclusion* has been used in many different ways across camps. In an attempt to standardize the understanding of what it means to be an inclusive camp, consistency is warranted in both verbal and printed communication. Rather than suggesting that the inclusion initiative is a “program,” it should be presented as a philosophy or culture of inclusion (or “culture of kindness” as articulated at one camp). These philosophies and language imply that campers and staff alike care for each other and the success and happiness of all people. People-first language inspires reflection, impacting behavior through mindful inclusion, and setting the stage to eliminate the “us vs. them” and “special needs” mentalities. When individuals are respected as equals and treated on a level plane, the distinction between those campers with and without disabilities is diminished. Ultimately, this mindset of equality and fairness can lead to systems change. Educational efforts around the inclusion initiative should target all camper families. Families of children without a disability should have an understanding of inclusive camp prior to the session. Families of children with a disability, who have previously attended a segregated camp, will need to understand the differences in a culture of inclusion.

In addition to minimizing the risk of a negative response from parents and campers through early understanding of inclusive camp, promotion of the benefits of sharing camp with individuals of varying abilities may lead to a greater desire of all families to have their child participate and grow through this experience. Promoting inclusion as the ultimate level of diversity training for young people will likely appeal to families seeking to teach these values to their children.

There is an emerging cultural shift at all of the camps in this cohort, with 89% of staff desiring to continue to work at an inclusive camp. Nevertheless, advocacy and educational efforts need not begin or end with the Summer 2015 experience. As camps communicate with families throughout the year, a concerted effort to share messages of inclusion will reinforce the introduction to this concept. This may be accomplished through featured articles, books (e.g., *Wonder*), enhanced websites including videos on the web, email contact, social media, and newsletter mailings. Using examples of camper outcomes has the potential to further educate families, staff, board members, and partner organizations, as well as reinforce the camp experience so that it extends beyond the summer.

## **Roles of the Inclusion Coordinator**

*Recommendation #3:* The inclusion coordinator position was a significant asset to the success of the inclusion initiative in its initial year, and this full-time summer position should be retained at these camps, and added at others, for continued inclusion of campers of varying abilities.

*Recommendation #4:* All staff members should be expected and prepared to support and facilitate a wide range of campers at an inclusive camp, with the inclusion coordinator serving as the facilitator, and not the sole expert and disability specialist.

*Recommendation #5: In support of an inclusive camp, staff must strive for and support social inclusion, where children of varying abilities are participating together and developing social relationships, rather than merely being in physical proximity to one another.*

All evidence from this evaluation points to the critical role that the inclusion coordinator plays in the success of an inclusive camp. Not only is it vital that the inclusion coordinator position be maintained at the camps within the initial cohort, but the addition of inclusion coordinators at other camps should be considered a vital initial step when any camp commences an inclusion initiative. According to the Laszlo report, 44% of camps surveyed did not hire an inclusion coordinator. Hiring highly trained inclusion coordinators who possess a unique set of skills and who embrace the concept of full inclusion should serve as the key catalyst in the scaling up of FJC's overall inclusive camp initiative.

Inclusion coordinators provided substantial support to camp staff. They should continue to encourage counselors to make accommodations for campers (e.g., schedule revisions) and be more available to all staff members. Senior staff should place greater emphasis on training and assisting all staff in making accommodations and facilitating inclusion. Taking the focus away from diagnostic labels and deficits will allow more time for staff training on facilitating social inclusion and accommodations. As other staff gain knowledge and skills (and they have asked for this), a decentralized approach to inclusion across the entire camp can take hold. This is where staff members across camp take on the responsibility to welcome and support all campers, rather than depending on those with expertise in disability services. It is not desirable, or sustainable, to only have one person or small team of staff who have been tasked to address camper problems. It is recommended that all staff participate in the facilitation of this inclusive culture by being better prepared to support a wide range of campers. Increased knowledge and skills enable staff to be less dependent on the expertise of the inclusion coordinator.

The mindset of camp, from inclusion coordinator to counselors should involve a progression from serving campers with disabilities for physical integration toward promoting and supporting social inclusion. In this way, children with disabilities are not only physically proximal to their peers while participating in the same activities, socially included. Social inclusion implies campers welcoming and accepting one another despite their differences, sharing interests, and having fun together as friends. With the inclusion coordinator roles clearly defined by senior leadership, (s)he can function primarily as a facilitator, trainer, and supporter of staff, liaison between senior staff, other staff members, campers and their families, and agent of social change. The inclusion coordinator has an opportunity to see the bigger picture, thereby facilitating a more welcoming, accommodating, camp experience for all children. This broader set of responsibilities is in contrast to a "disability specialist" who focuses on the reactive management of behavior of children with "special needs."

## Intake Process

*Recommendation #6: A standard intake form should be developed for camps, under the guidance of FJC, that reveals camper strengths, skills, and preferences, with less focus on labels, diagnoses, and deficits.*

Parents only share information that they want camp staff to know. A standard intake form that allows for parents to share additional information will most probably provide what is necessary. As all campers have strengths and weaknesses, it is appropriate to inquire about both through an intake process. This acknowledges that all children have abilities, though varied. When strengths are known, and parents are invited to share them, perceived weaknesses may be shared more readily. Additionally, camp staff's prior knowledge of strengths may lead to a discovery of common interests among campers and garner benefits for all.

Rather than focus on the desire for more information and labels, strategies used in universal design and behavior management will determine the staff response to the support needs of all campers. More information would not necessarily change how an issue is addressed. In fact, identified problems and labels may be misleading and not helpful in designing supportive programs. Rather, staff would benefit from knowing effective responses when challenges are presented.

There may be benefit for camps and FJC in creating a standardized intake process to be used across camps. In this manner, information will be shared that is useful to staff in the design and implementation of activities and programs throughout the summer will be shared. Additionally, this would allow for proactive development of strategies and supports that accommodate for a wide variety of camper skills.

## Staff Hiring and Training

*Recommendation #7: The hiring of future camp staff should include counselors and activity specialists with previous camp experience and some of whom have had experience working with children with disabilities.*

*Recommendation #8: In addition to preparing unit heads and cabin counselors for an inclusive camp prior to the beginning of the camp season, activity specialists must receive pre-camp training and supports commensurate with other staff.*

*Recommendation #9: Senior staff should consider the hiring and use of “floating” staff as a means to support counselors and activity specialists throughout the summer.*

*Recommendation #10: Staff should support “equitable” participation of all campers, where certain children are provided with opportunities to participate in modified, though not identical, versions of activities.*

Hiring practices should include employing those with previous programming experience working with children of varying abilities, as well as individuals who have simply had previous camp experience. Both types of experiences have provided staff with a foundation to support an inclusive camp. In addition, the hiring senior staff should impart the philosophy of inclusion to job candidates as they assess candidates' attitudes about including all campers.

Consistent with the Laszlo report (2013), the greatest barriers to inclusion are not poor attitudes or lack of physical accessibility, but lack of staff training. Preparation of counselors and other staff needs to take place prior to camp commencement, and more training is needed to address challenging behaviors and the facilitation of inclusion. Greater attention needs to be paid to activity specialists – they require training and supports commensurate with other staff. Rather than a “hierarchy of training,” with unit heads typically having greater access to the inclusion coordinator and additional inclusion training, staff in all positions should receive increased levels of preparation and support. Unit heads should be in a strategic position to assist staff members, and other camp staff should have a stronger foundation to be in a position to provide necessary supports to campers.

The telephone interviews with senior staff and inclusion coordinators suggested common areas of concern. In an effort to manage the behavioral support required for some of the campers, young staff experienced frustration in meeting the needs of all campers. This was particularly true during family cabin time. Providing structure for this time of day, as well as a team of two counselors per bunk – at least one seasoned in inclusion and one new – can assist with creating a “family” atmosphere. The more seasoned counselor could have the specific role of facilitating a successful camp experience for all of the campers, while the other counselor could address the behavioral issues that impede success. The addition of “floating” staff may also be considered as a means to provide support for counselors and activity specialists when the need arises. In the years ahead, it is expected that campers who have grown up in an inclusive camp environment will become more effective counselors.

The struggle between proactively designing an inclusive environment for “equitable” participation – where campers are accommodated in individualized ways, and are provided opportunities to participate in activities with modifications – rather than reactively addressing camper problems once they occur for “identical” participation – to insist upon all campers participating in all activities in an identical manner – is interspersed throughout every aspect of camp. Universal design strategies, which counselors reported to appreciate, promote equitable participation and will be better executed if more

examples are given in interactive training sessions. Given the ages of most camp staff, situational role-playing appears to be an effective technique for learning to provide specific supports. For example, the provision of sensory breaks throughout the day, and throughout camp, may prove beneficial for many children. Likewise, knowledge of adaptations for activities and games will contribute to an inclusive culture, as activity specialists work to welcome and accommodate all campers. With adequate training, all staff will be able to use cooperative learning strategies (i.e., facilitating small groups of campers working toward a common goal, where all have a role to play) and empower campers to assist other campers. Many counselors are requesting more extensive training to work with campers with disabilities and support inclusive camp. This willingness serves as a strong foundation for further camp development.

## Camper Engagement

*Recommendation #11: Campers with and without disabilities should be prepared, prior to and during summer camp, for social inclusion.*

*Recommendation #12: In order to promote advocacy for inclusion among campers, several less-traditional activities could be designed that reinforce the unique strengths of less popular campers (e.g., art and music).*

Social inclusion is an important goal for a summer camp and is best attained when all campers, with and without disabilities, are prepared for experiencing fellow campers who may be marginalized. This preparation needs to occur both prior to and during the camp season. Best practices support having discussions about participating with others who may be different and appreciating similarities that may not be clearly evident. A head start through family conversation prior to the summer months can go a long way in readying a camper with a more open-minded attitude toward inclusion. Fun activities and enjoyable reading material could be provided to families by camps to introduce these conversations at home. A plethora of age appropriate literature and videos are available that share important and useful messages supporting inclusion.

In the pursuit of an inclusive camp experience, a positive outcome can best be determined through the eyes of the participants (i.e., the campers). Campers' perspectives on inclusive camp can be both informative to leadership and an opportunity for each camper to be fully engaged at camp. One of the more effective ways to educate others about the strengths, needs, and preferences of individuals, and the richness of a diverse camp, is brought to fellow campers by those with varying abilities. Oftentimes, those who are most impacted are the most effective messengers. One approach to engaging all campers, and highlighting idiosyncratic strengths, is to design bunk activities consistent with the interests and strengths of campers who often find themselves marginalized in other areas. For example, an evening session can include an activity that taps into creative arts or board game skills of a particular camper who does not typically keep up with his/her bunkmates during more physically-driven pursuits.

Another suggestion is a program that implements the *InFocus* process, which uses photography and group dialogue to convey messages of inclusion and create a bond among the participants. This exercise may provide the structure and bonding needed during family cabin time, in a thoughtful, fun, and creative way. It also has the potential to further the promotion and marketing efforts of FJC's overall inclusive camp initiative, as the results may be shared with the broader community throughout the year.

## Further Evaluation

*Recommendation #13: Camper outcomes can be determined through the design and use of evaluation tools to assess camper behaviors, skills, attitudes, and overall inclusion at camp.*

*Recommendation #14: Additional evaluation protocols and strategies should be designed culminating in a more comprehensive and valid set of data concerning the inclusive camp initiative. For example, (1) additional items added to the *Camper Satisfaction Insights (CSI)* survey; (2) a standardized method for the collection of camper and staff information across camps; (3) an evaluation schedule designed and disseminated to senior staff and inclusion coordinators prior to the camp season; and (4) identification of additional exemplary camps and/or staff members, under the FJC umbrella, to capture and compare best practices for inclusive service delivery.*

In evaluating the success of each camp, return to the ideals that were promoted and marketed to potential campers and their families. In addition to interviewing and surveying staff, there is a need to gather feedback from participants. As each camp's board is understandably concerned about the viability and sustainability of an inclusive program, camper and family evaluations also have the potential to provide strong support and valuable insight going forward.

Any evaluative tool to assess camper behavior, skills, attitudes, and social inclusion will have to be conducted through simple, user-friendly means. Nevertheless, it is highly recommended that staff pay attention to, highlight, and disseminate camper outcomes in order to determine the presence or absence of an inclusive culture and the overall effectiveness of the inclusive camp initiative.

In the *Camper Satisfaction Insights (CSI)* survey, it is recommended that two to three additional items be added reflecting parent perspectives on what enriches, or interferes with, the inclusive camp experience. For example, parents may be asked to identify their awareness concerning their child attending an inclusive camp that serves children of varying abilities. Moreover, an evaluation timeline needs to be developed by the evaluation team in advance of the 2016 camp season. In this manner, senior staff, inclusion coordinators, and other staff will be better prepared to share valuable data and personal perspectives concerning the inclusion initiative. With camp data from the initial cohort, and an evaluation of other exemplary inclusive camps under the FJC umbrella, best practices can continue to

be identified, evaluated, and replicated. With a more robust set of evaluative data, individual camps and FJC should have a stronger rationale for continuing to create, support, grow, and sustain inclusive camp opportunities.

## List of Recommendations

- Recommendation #1: To support and sustain a culture of inclusion, remain consistent in all communication using people-first, equal, and fair language across campers, families, staff, and the broader community.
- Recommendation #2: Advocate for inclusive camp throughout the year through the sharing of literature, social media, the web, newsletters, etc.
- Recommendation #3: The inclusion coordinator position was a significant asset to the success of the inclusion initiative in its initial year, and this full-time summer position should be retained at these camps, and added at others, for continued inclusion of campers of varying abilities.
- Recommendation #4: All staff members should be expected and prepared to support and facilitate a wide range of campers at an inclusive camp, with the inclusion coordinator serving as the facilitator, and not the sole expert and disability specialist.
- Recommendation #5: In support of an inclusive camp, staff must strive for and support social inclusion, where children of varying abilities are participating together and developing social relationships, rather than merely being in physical proximity to one another.
- Recommendation #6: A standard intake form should be developed by camps, under the guidance of FJC, that reveals camper strengths, skills, and preferences, with less focus on labels, diagnoses, and deficits.
- Recommendation #7: The hiring of future camp staff should include counselors and activity specialists with previous camp experience and some of whom have had experience working with children with disabilities.
- Recommendation #8: In addition to preparing unit heads and cabin counselors for an inclusive camp prior to the beginning of the camp season, activity specialists must receive pre-camp training and supports commensurate with other staff.
- Recommendation #9: Senior staff should consider the hiring and use of "floating" staff as a means to support counselors and activity specialists throughout the summer.
- Recommendation #10: Staff should support "equitable" participation of all campers, where certain children are provided with opportunities to participate in modified, though not identical, versions of activities.
- Recommendation #11: Campers with and without disabilities should be prepared, prior to and during summer camp, for social inclusion.

- Recommendation #12: In order to promote advocacy for inclusion among campers, several less-traditional activities could be designed that reinforce the unique strengths of less popular campers (e.g., art and music).
- Recommendation #13: Camper outcomes can be determined through the design and use of evaluation tools to assess camper behaviors, skills, attitudes, and overall inclusion at camp.
- Recommendation #14: Additional evaluation protocols and strategies should be designed culminating in a more comprehensive and valid set of data concerning the inclusive camp initiative. For example, (1) additional items added to the Camper Satisfaction Insights (CSI) survey; (2) a standardized method for the collection of camper and staff information across camps; (3) an evaluation schedule designed and disseminated to senior staff and inclusion coordinators prior to the camp season; and (4) identification of additional exemplary camps and/or staff members, under the FJC umbrella, to capture and compare best practices for inclusive service delivery.

# Appendix

Senior Staff Interview Guide

Inclusion Coordinator Interview Guide

Camp Staff Survey

Senior Staff and Inclusion Coordinator Focus Group Questions

Tables and Figures



## Senior Staff Interview Guide



1. How has the FJC Ruderman/Alexander initiative changed the way you serve campers with disabilities?
2. How did you identify, and market to, families that included a child with a disability?
3. What on your camper application form triggered the need for additional information?
4. Did you pre-determine a certain number of campers with disabilities to include? How was that decision made?
5. How were camp sessions selected for campers with disabilities? (e.g., parent choice, limited to a particular session)
  - Were any prospective campers turned away? What criteria were used for acceptance or denial?
6. How were campers with disabilities assigned to cabins?
7. In addition to hiring an inclusion coordinator, did your hiring practices change due to your inclusion initiative? If yes, in what ways? (e.g., numbers of staff, having specific skills)
8. How were staff trained to serve campers with disabilities for inclusion?
  - Who provided this training to staff? How much time was devoted to it?
  - What disability and inclusion-related topics were covered?
  - How was training delivered? (e.g., powerpoints, handouts, dvds/videos, role play, case studies, staff manual)
9. What concerns about including campers with disabilities did you have prior to launching your summer 2015 camp season?
10. What are your current concerns about inclusive camp? What barriers have interfered with your efforts?



## Inclusion Coordinator Interview Guide



1. Please describe your overall role as an inclusion coordinator.
2. What was your intake process once a camper with a disability was identified?
3. What was done with the intake information that was collected? (e.g., accommodation plan developed, camper-staff ratio support determined)
  - How were individual camper accommodations or other supports communicated to camp staff (e.g., counselors, activity specialists, one-on-one supports)?
4. How were camp staff trained for inclusion?
  - Who provided the inclusion training to staff? How much time was devoted to it?
  - What disability and inclusion-related topics were covered?
  - How was it delivered? (e.g., powerpoints, handouts, dvds/videos, role play, case studies, staff manual)
  - How did staff training address the handling of challenging behaviors among campers?
    - o What key components of positive behavior supports were provided to camp staff, if any, to address camper behavior?
  - Did all staff receive the same training? (e.g., counselors, activity specialists, 1-on-1 supports, unit heads)
5. What types of supports and adaptations and/or accommodations are being made for campers with disabilities?
  - Which ones consumed a good deal of your time?
6. Are campers without disabilities prepared to participate with their peers with disabilities?
  - What issues have you encountered with typical peers related to the inclusion of campers with disabilities?
7. What positive outcomes have you identified for campers with disabilities?
  - Any positive outcomes for campers without disabilities?
8. What challenges have you encountered?
9. What additional supports and resources do you need to sustain and/or improve this inclusive camp initiative in future summers?
10. What training did you not receive this year that you believe would be helpful in improving your services next summer



## Camp Staff Survey



**Your opinion counts!**  
**We realize how important you are to the success of camp.**

We want to better understand your perspectives on including campers with disabilities. Please take approximately 10 minutes to tell us about your experiences so camp staff can be better supported in the future.

### Role

Where did you work?

- Camp Judaea
- CYJ Texas
- JCA Shalom
- B'nai B'rith Camp
- JCC Camp Chi
- Camp Harlam

What was your role?

- One-on-one support to a camper with a disability
- Counselor
- Unit head
- Activity specialist
- Other; please explain \_\_\_\_\_

Did you work with a camper with a disability in your bunk/unit/activity/other?

- Yes
- No

### Training and Preparation

Please indicate to what level you agree with the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
Camp prepared me for my role							
Camp prepared me to include campers with disabilities							
Camp prepared me to work with campers with challenging behaviors							
Camp prepared me for specific campers with disabilities assigned to me							
I had the skills and knowledge needed to include campers with disabilities							

\*\*\*\*\*Please continue on next page\*\*\*\*\*

What additional training do you wish you had received?

**Support**

Please indicate to what level you agree with the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
The Inclusion Coordinator helped me include a camper with a disability if I needed assistance							
The Inclusion Coordinator helped me respond to challenging behaviors if I needed assistance							
The Inclusion Coordinator was readily available							

For what reasons did you ask the Inclusion Coordinator for help?

What do you wish the Inclusion Coordinator had done to help you?

**\*\*\*\*\*Please continue on next page\*\*\*\*\***

**Personal Perspectives:**

Please indicate to what level you agree with the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Campers with disabilities added value to the camp						
Campers with disabilities take away from the camp experience						
Campers with disabilities should be included in the future						
I enjoyed having campers with disabilities at camp						
If I am to work as a camp counselor in the future, I would choose to work at an inclusive camp						

What did you do to help campers with disabilities feel more included in camp?

Please give examples of how you helped campers without disabilities understand and include a camper with a disability?

**Demographics:**

Age:

- 18 years of age or under
- 19-23 years of age
- 24-35 years of age
- 35+ years of age

Experience with individuals with disabilities (check all that apply):

- I have a family member with a disability
- I have a friend with a disability
- Students with disabilities were included in my class(es) in school
- I have volunteered with people with disabilities
- I have worked in a paid position supporting people with disabilities
- I have no experience with people with disabilities

**Thank you for taking the time to improve camp for everyone!**

## Senior Staff and Inclusion Coordinator Focus Group Questions

### Focus Group: Senior Staff InFocus Evaluation Team

- Additional reflections on summer 2015
- What did your camp do to create an inclusive environment?
- What changes would you make in the hiring and preparation of camp staff?
- How do you plan to meet your obligation to expand your inclusive camp initiative?
- Now that your camps have experienced children with disabilities, what ideas do you have to continue to move from physical integration to social inclusion?
- What work needs to be done with your Board of Directors to ensure the sustainability of these efforts?
- Is there anything else that you would like to share concerning your inclusion initiative?



InFocus  
Stuart J. Schleien, Ph.D.  
Kimberly D. Miller, M.S.  
Ginger Walton, M.S.N.  
Carla Roth, B.A.



### Focus Group: Inclusion Coordinators InFocus Evaluation Team

- Additional reflections on summer 2015
- What did your camp do to create an inclusive environment?
- What challenges did you face as an Inclusion Coordinator?
- What changes would you make in the preparation of camp staff?
- Now that your camps have experienced children with disabilities, what ideas do you have to continue to move from physical integration to social inclusion?
- What additional supports would help you be more effective during summer camp 2016?
- Is there anything else that you would like to share concerning your inclusion initiative?



InFocus  
Stuart J. Schleien, Ph.D.  
Kimberly D. Miller, M.S.  
Ginger Walton, M.S.N.  
Carla Roth, B.A.



## Tables and Figures

**Table 1. Camps Participating in Evaluation**

Camp	Location	Disabilities Served
B'nai B'rith Camp	Neotsu, OR	Physical and intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, developmental disabilities, and some medical conditions
Camp JCA Shalom	Malibu, CA	Intellectual, developmental, physical, neurological, and behavioral disabilities
Camp Judaea	Hendersonville, NC	Autism spectrum disorder, hearing impaired, developmental and intellectual disabilities, and communication disorders
Camp Young Judaea Texas	Wimberley, TX	Autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disabilities, ADHD, and other disabilities
JCC Camp Chi	Wisconsin Dells, WI	Autism spectrum disorder, Asperger's syndrome, and Down syndrome
URJ Camp Harlam	Kunkletown, PA	Acceptance of campers with disabilities is made on an individual basis in collaboration with families. We've successfully accommodated campers with learning disabilities, physical disabilities such as cerebral palsy (that don't require a wheelchair), campers on the autism spectrum, with ADHD and oppositional defiant disorders, and other disabilities

**Table 2. Number of Campers with Disabilities Served and Percentage of Camper Population**

Camp	Total Campers	Total Campers with Disabilities <sup>3</sup>	Percentage of all Campers who had a Disability	Total Campers with Support Needs <sup>4</sup>	Percentage of all Campers with Support Needs
B'nai B'rith	516	24	4.7%	78	15.1%
Camp Chi	1,320	23	1.7%	<sup>5</sup>	
Camp Harlam	1,018	35	3.4%	204	20.0%
Camp Judaea	563	68	12.1%	142	25.2%
CYJ Texas	566	14	2.5%	24	4.2%
JCA Shalom	868	39	4.5%	<sup>3</sup>	
Total	4,851	203	4.2%		

<sup>3</sup> These are campers reported by the camp as meeting the FJC definition

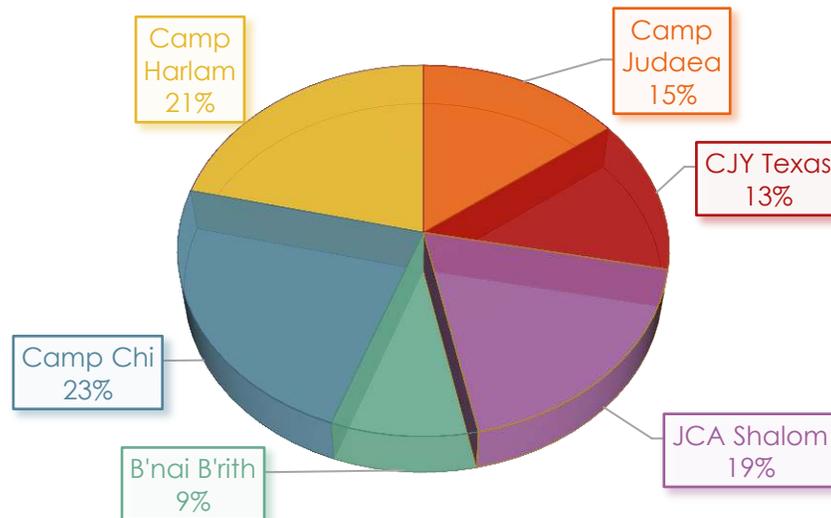
<sup>4</sup> These are campers reported by the camp as meeting the FJC definition, plus those that they identified as having support needs, but whom did not meet the FJC definition

<sup>5</sup> Camp did not track these data

**Table 3. Percentage of Campers with Disabilities Who Were New Campers**

Camp	Total Campers with Disabilities <sup>6</sup>	Number of Campers with Disabilities Who were <i>Returning</i>	Number of Campers with Disabilities Who were <i>New</i>	Percentage of Campers with Disabilities Who were <i>New</i>
B'nai B'rith	24	8	16	66.7%
Camp Chi	23	15	8	34.8%
Camp Harlam	35	14	21	60.0%
Camp Judaea	68	42	26	38.2%
CYJ Texas	14	3	11	78.6%
JCA Shalom	39	20	19	48.7%
Total	203	102	101	49.8%

**Figure 1. Camp Representation: Percentage of Total Respondents**



Of these 522 staff members:

- 46 were from **B'nai B'rith** (of 92 staff<sup>7</sup>, 50% response rate),
- 70 from **CYJ Texas** (of 109 staff, 64% response rate),
- 77 from **Camp Judaea**, (of 140, 55% response rate)<sup>8</sup>
- 97 from **JCA Shalom** (of 160, 61% response rate)
- 111 from **Camp Harlam**, (of 247, 45% response rate)<sup>9</sup>
- 121 from **Camp Chi** (of 323, 37% response rate)

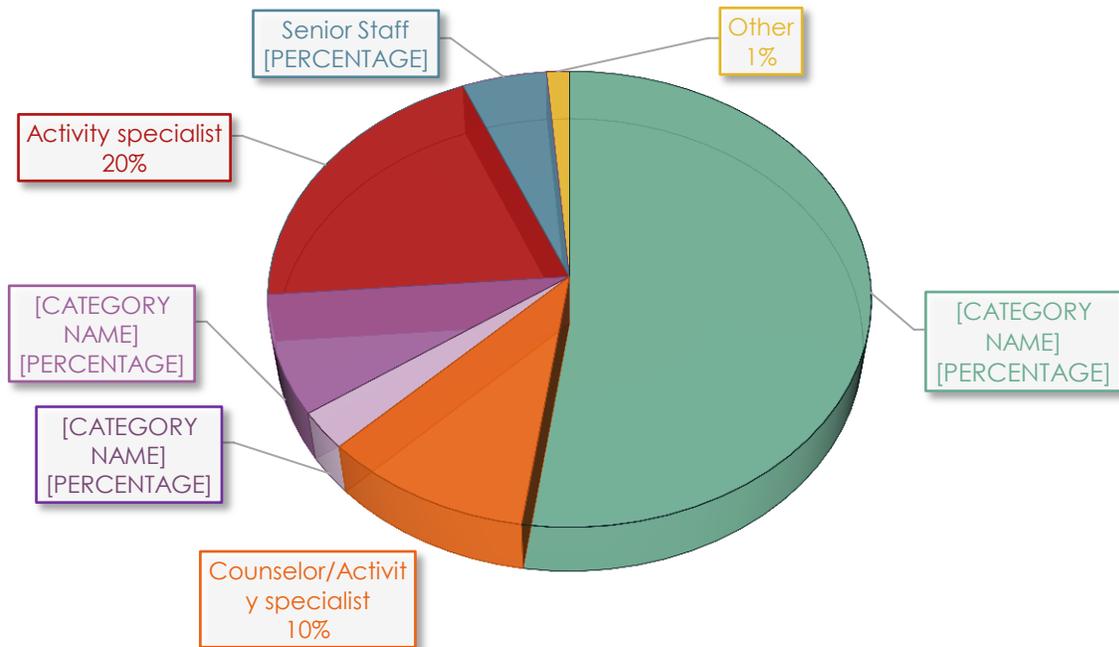
<sup>6</sup> These are campers reported by the camp as meeting the FJC definition of disability

<sup>7</sup> Number of staff members is based on staff that were at each camp for the last session of the summer

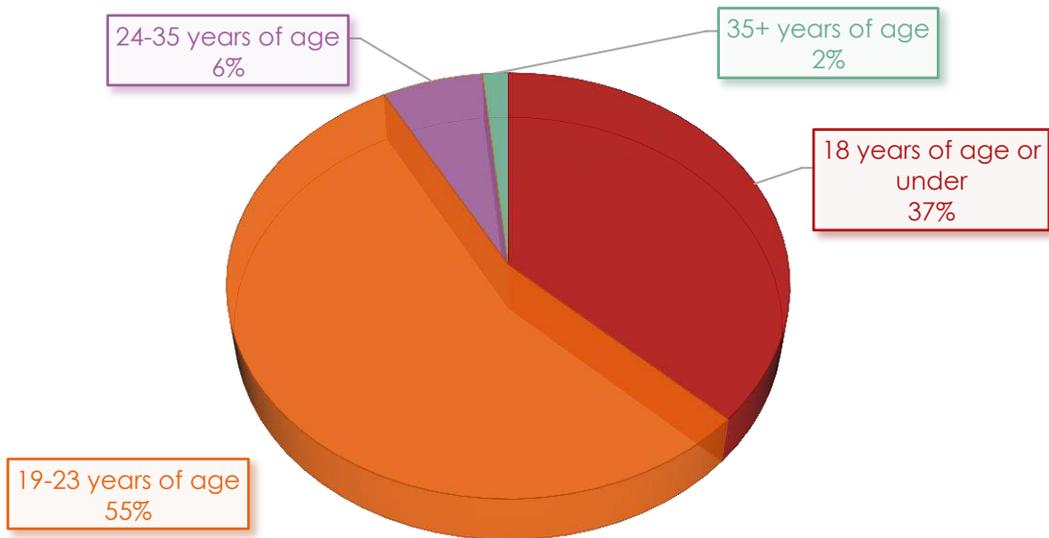
<sup>8</sup> Survey completion appears to have been limited to counselors, unit heads, and activity specialists. No surveys received from senior staff or "other." This would impact the response rate as senior staff and "others" were included in the total number of staff. If only counselors, unit heads, and activity specialists are included, there were 106 staff and the response rate would be 73%

<sup>9</sup> No surveys were received for respondents who identified themselves as "other" which likely impacted the response rate as these were counted in the total number of staff.

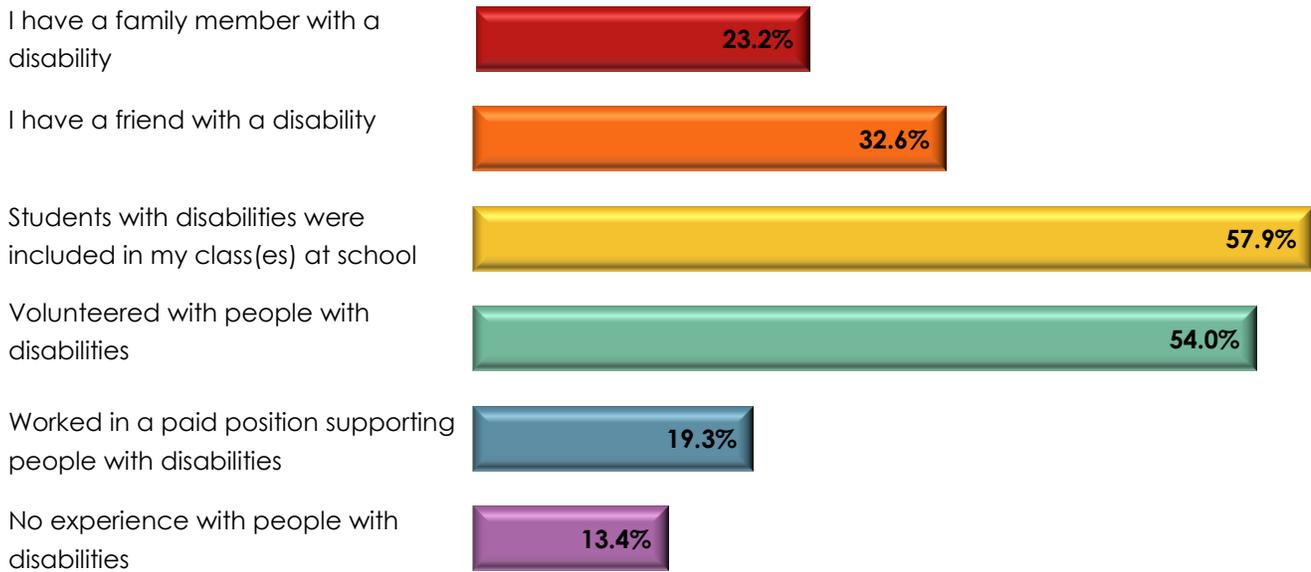
**Figure 2. Roles of Respondents: Percentage of Total Respondents**



**Figure 3. Age of Respondents**



**Figure 4. Prior Experience with Individuals with Disabilities**



**Figure 5. Training and Preparation Frequency of Responses<sup>10</sup>**



<sup>10</sup> The categories of "strongly disagree," "disagree," and "somewhat disagree" were collapsed into one category of "disagree" to improve readability of figures throughout this report. However, when calculating means, the complete 6-point scale was utilized.

Figure 6. Camp Prepared Me for My Role: Mean Scores for Each Role

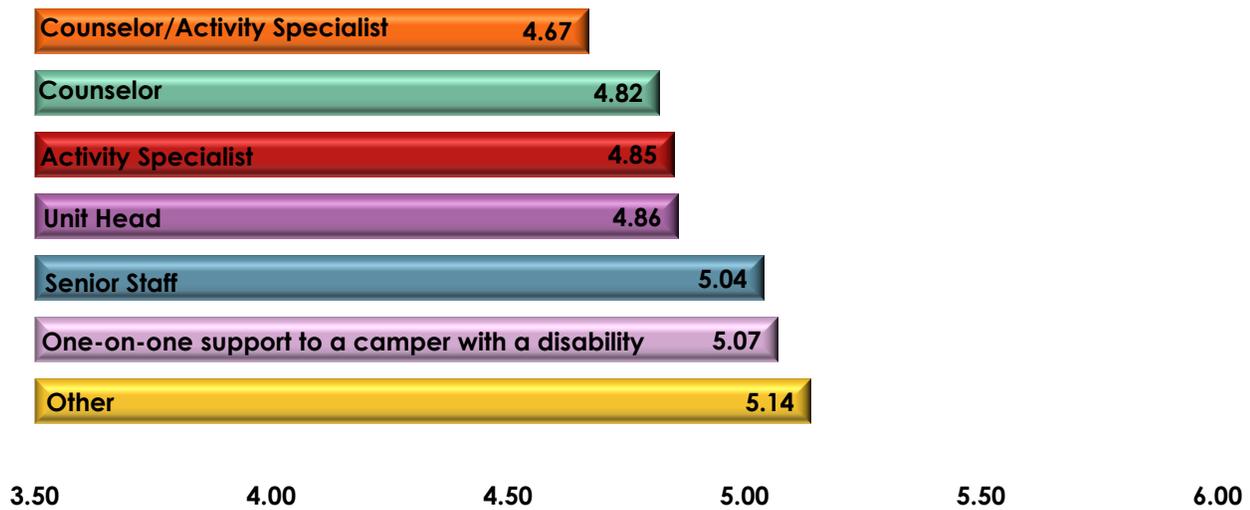
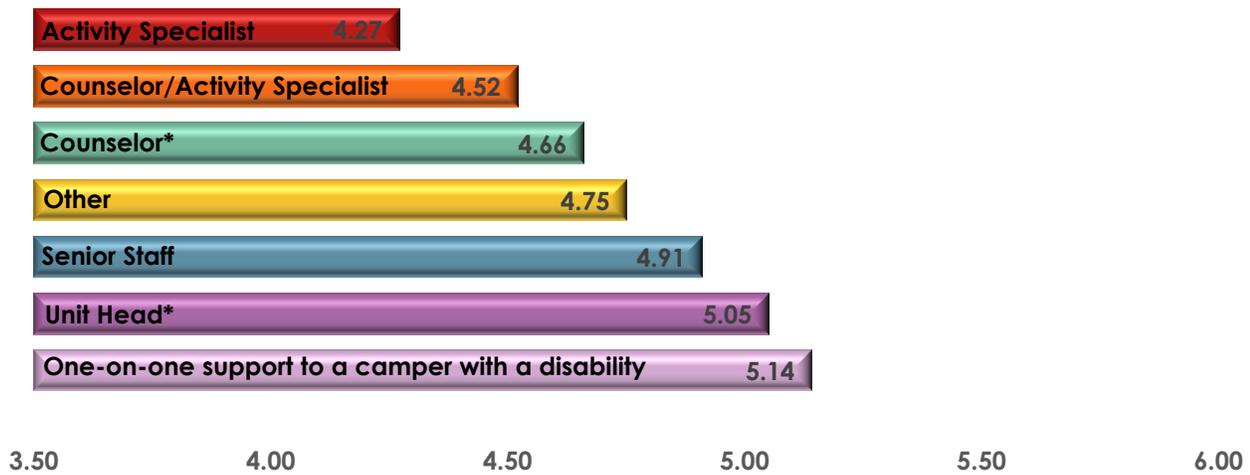
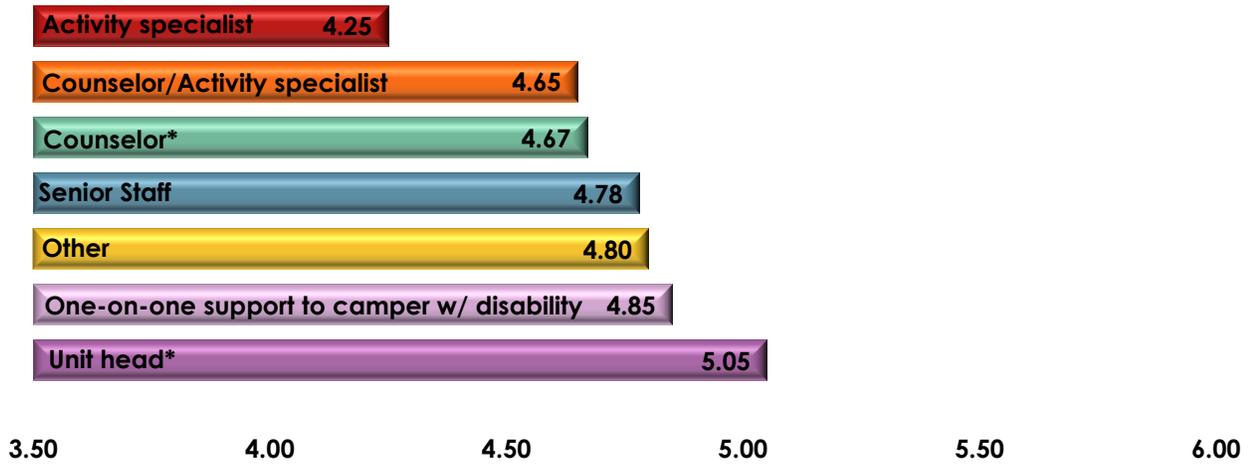


Figure 7. Camp Prepared Me to Include Campers with Disabilities: Mean Scores for Each Role



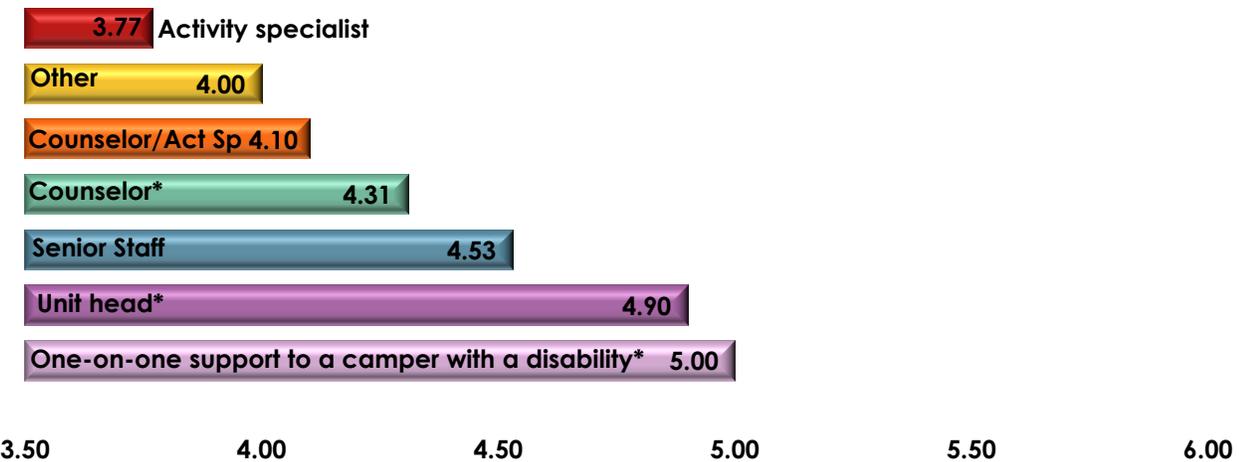
\*Higher than activity specialists at a statistically significant level

**Figure 8. Camp Prepared Me to Work with Campers with Challenging Behaviors: Mean Scores for Each Role**



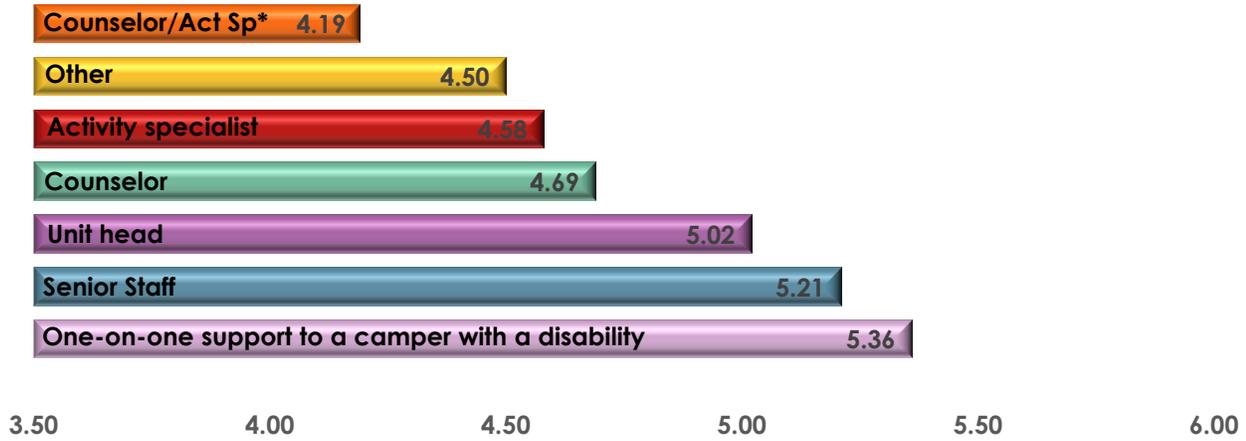
\*Higher than activity specialists at a statistically significant level

**Figure 9. Mean Scores for Each Role for the Question: Camp Prepared Me to Work with Specific Campers with Disabilities Assigned to Me**



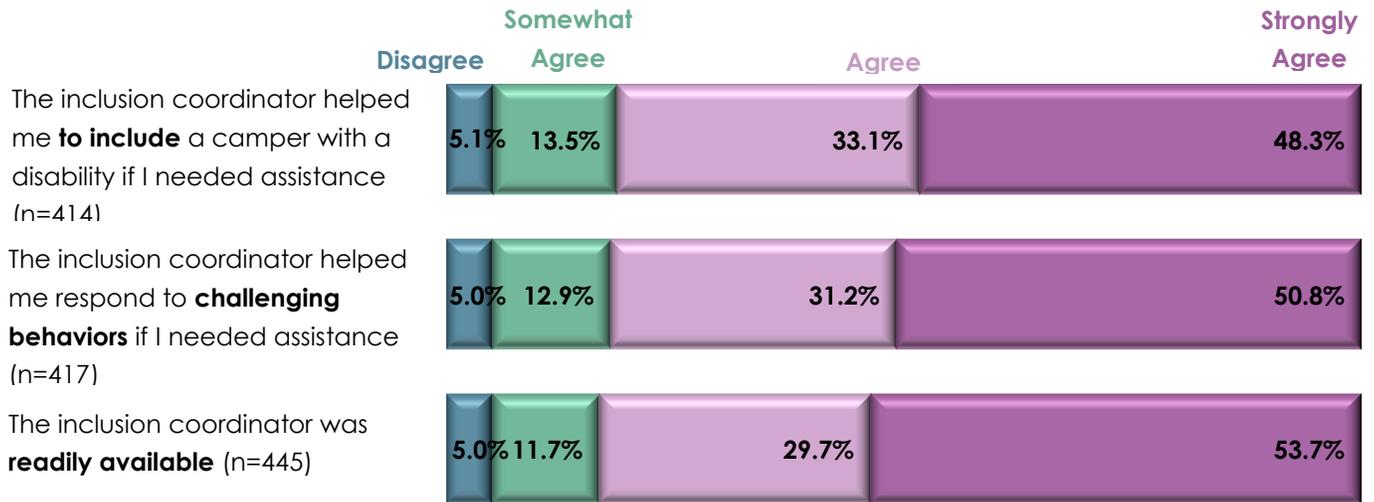
\*Higher than activity specialists at a statistically significant level

**Figure 10. I Had the Skills and Knowledge Needed to Include Campers with Disabilities: Mean Scores for Each Role**

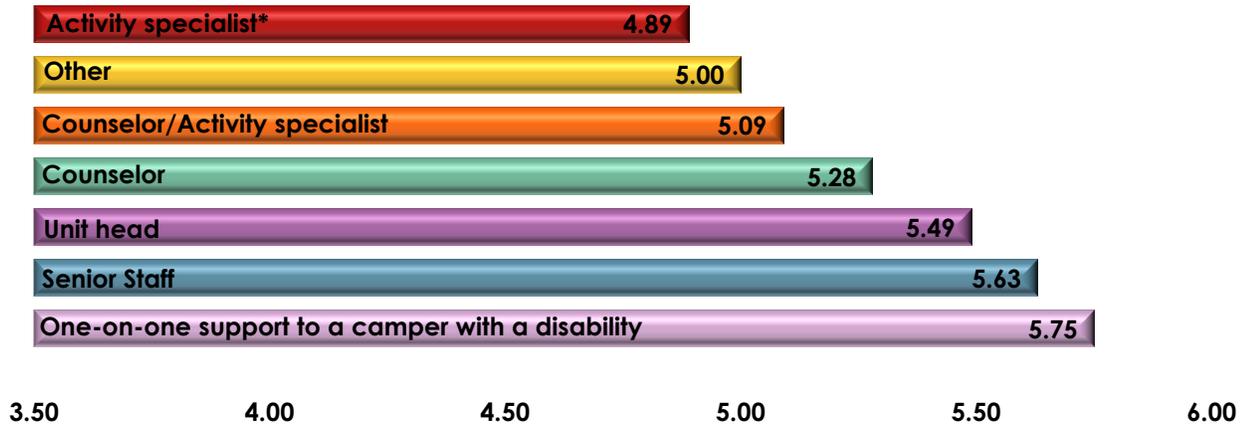


\*Lower than senior staff, unit heads, one-on-one supports, and counselors at a statistically significant level

**Figure 11. Support Frequency of Responses**

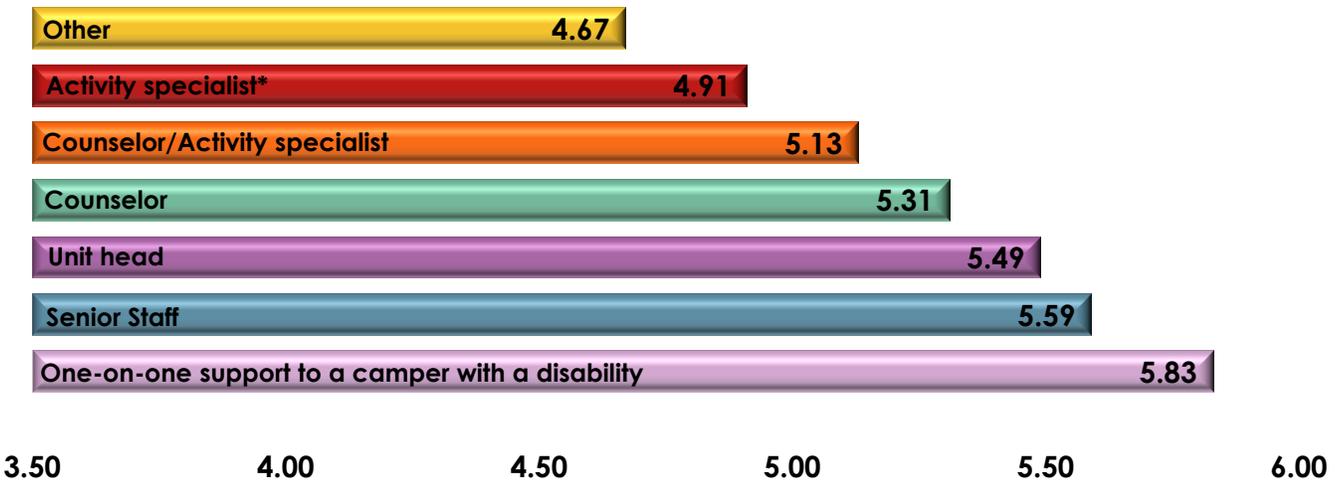


**Figure 12. The Inclusion Coordinator Helped Me Include a Camper with a Disability if I Needed Assistance: Mean Scores for Each Role**



\*Lower than unit heads, counselors, senior staff, and one-on-one supports at a statistically significant level

**Figure 13. The Inclusion Coordinator Helped Me Respond to Challenging Behaviors if I Needed Assistance: Mean Scores for Each Role**



\*Lower than counselors, unit heads, senior staff, and one-on-one supports at a statistically significant level

Figure 14. The Inclusion Coordinator was Readily Available: Mean Scores for Each Role

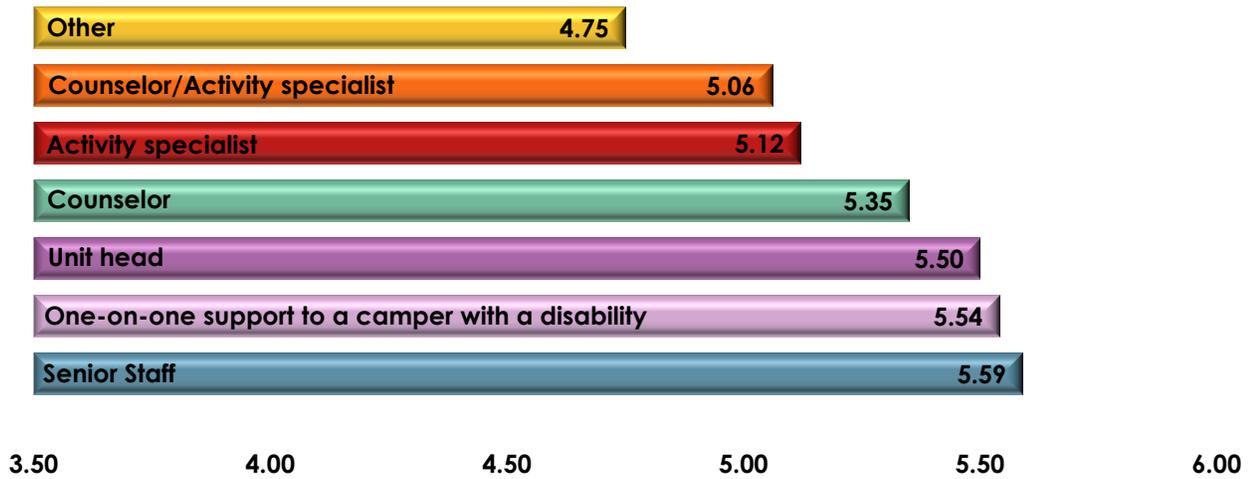


Figure 15. Personal Perspectives on Inclusion: Frequency of Responses

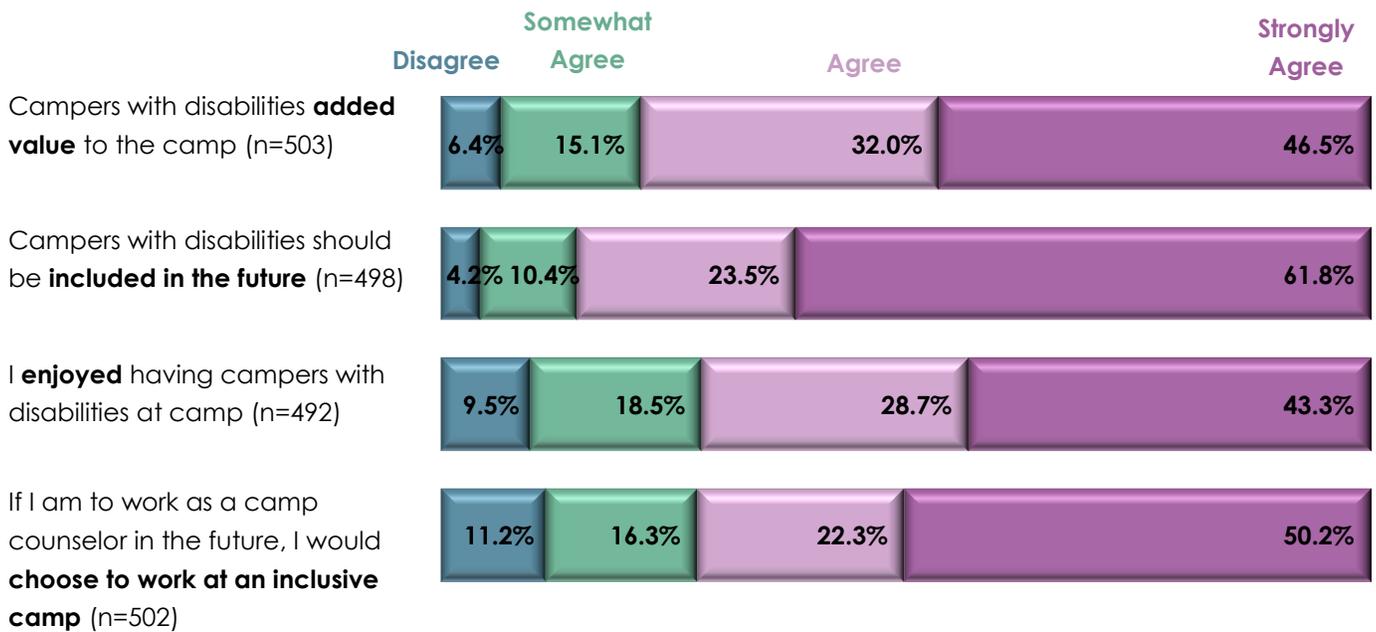


Figure 16. Campers with Disabilities Added Value to the Camp: Mean Scores for Each Role

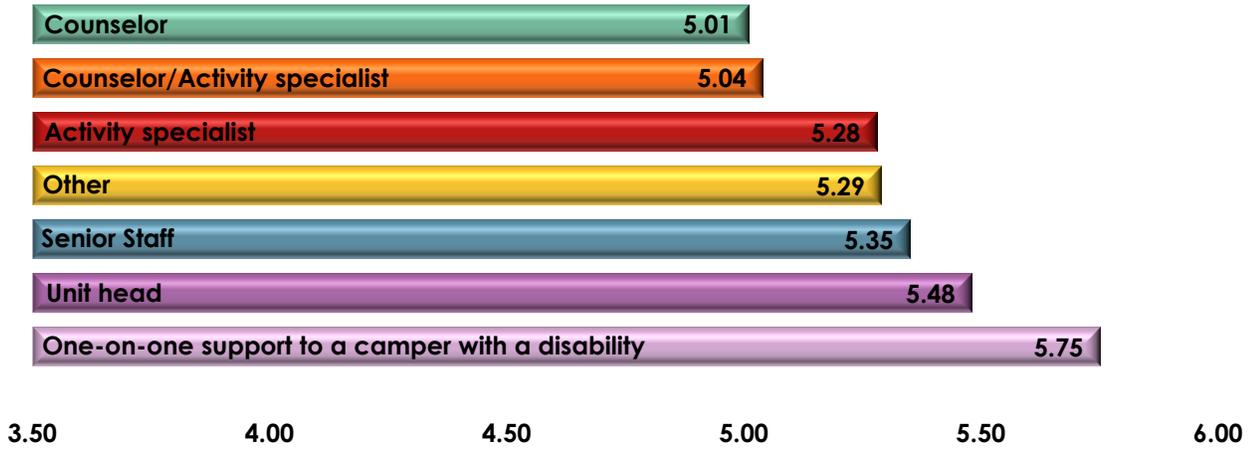


Figure 17. Campers with Disabilities Should be Included in the Future: Mean Scores for Each Role

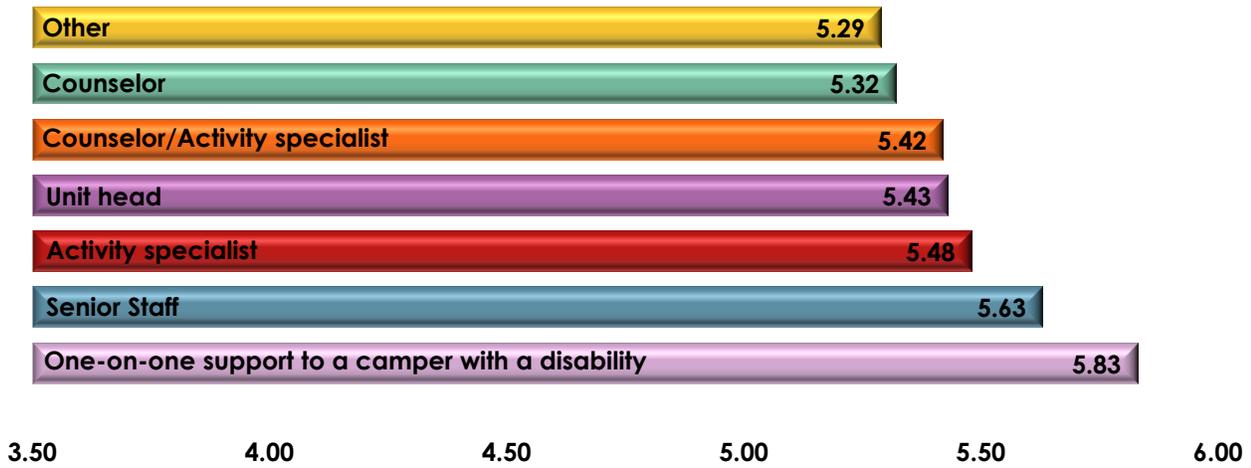


Figure 18. I Enjoyed Having Campers with Disabilities at Camp: Mean Scores for Each Role

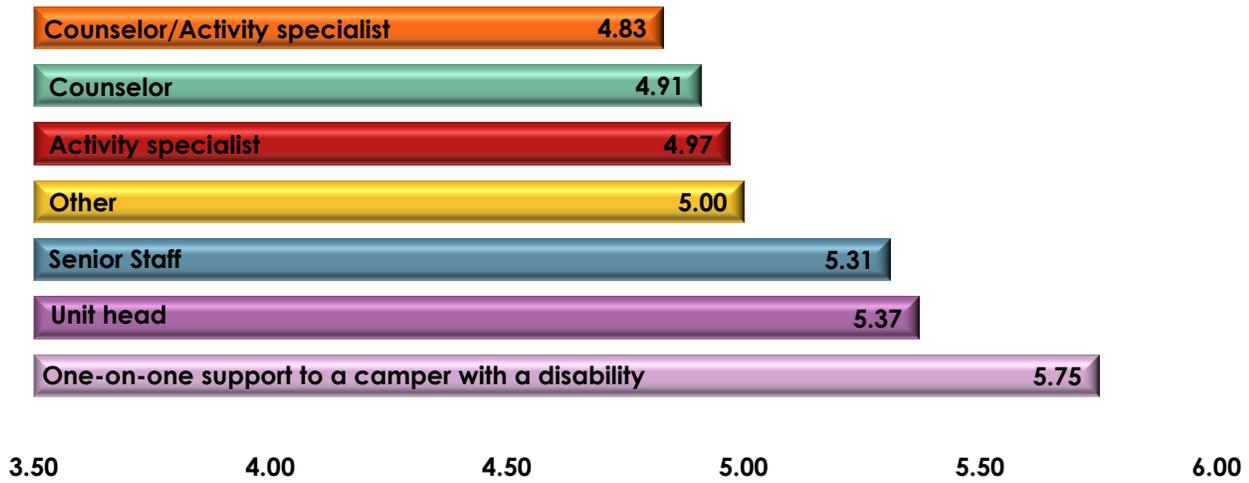
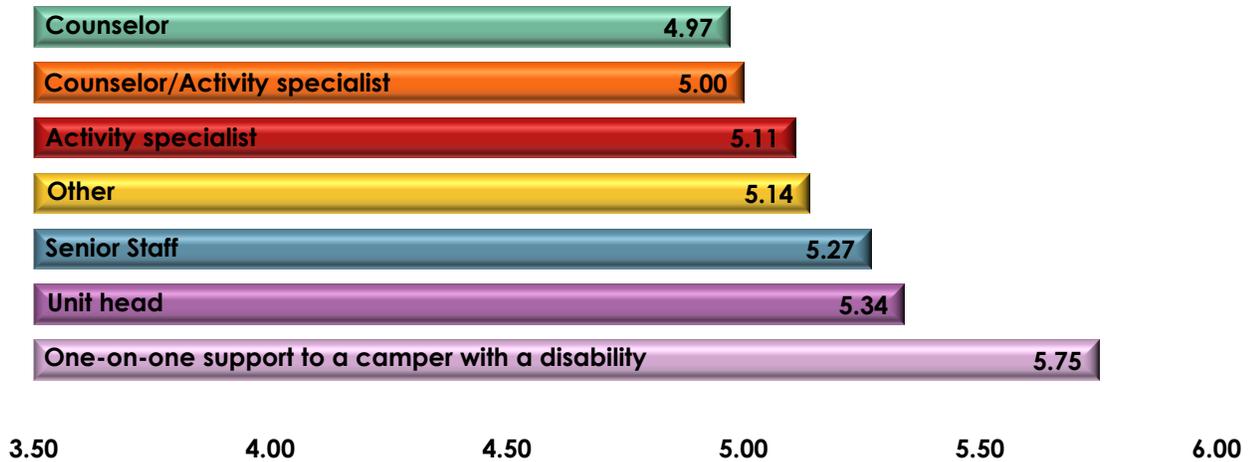
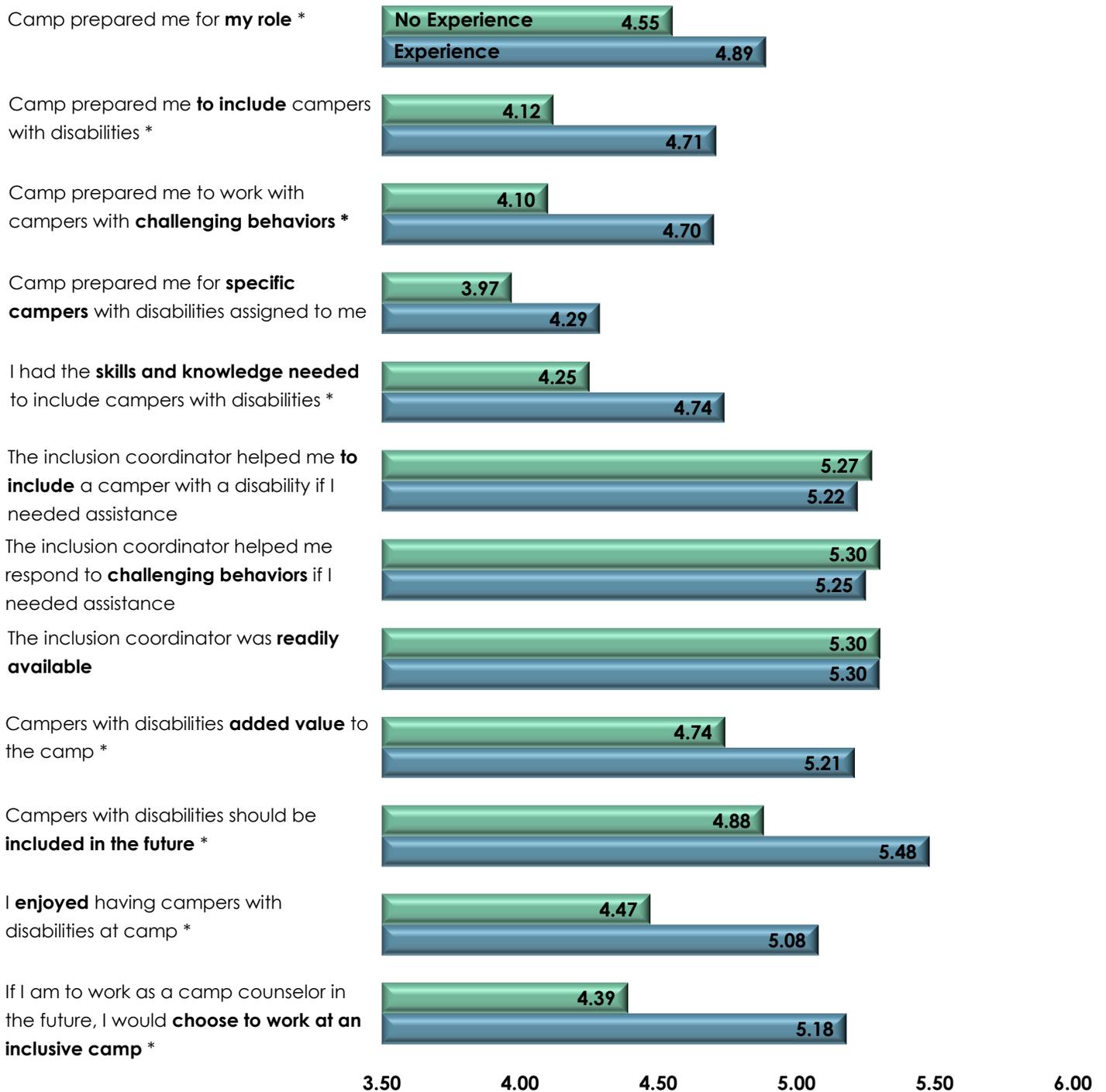


Figure 19. If I Am to Work as a Camp Counselor in the Future, I Would Choose to Work at an Inclusive Camp: Mean Scores for Each Role



**Figure 20. Comparison of Means for Respondents With and Without Experience with People with Disabilities**



\* A statistically significant difference was present between those with and without prior experience

**Figure 21. Camper Family Views of Inclusion Initiative: Frequency of Responses Compared across Campers With and Without Disabilities/Special Needs**

