

Results of a sociological survey of parents of children with mental disabilities on the social effect of the project «Inclusive sports for all» of the special Olympics Russia

UDC 796

PhD, Associate Professor **E.V. Burtseva**¹,PhD, Associate Professor **L.A. Parfenova**¹PhD, of cultural Associate Professor **M.S. Rakova**^{1, 2}¹Volga region state university of physical education, sports and tourism, Kazan²Special Olympics Russia, Moscow

Corresponding author: volder1968@mail.ru

Received by the editorial office on 03.03.2025

Abstract

Purpose of the study. To identify the social effects of the project "Inclusive Sports for All", implemented by the Special Olympics Russia based on the results of a sociological survey of parents.

Methodology and organization of the research. As part of the sociological study, a survey was conducted of the main social customer of the project - parents (743 respondents) and guardians of athletes (100 respondents) with mental disabilities in the Ivanovo, Kostroma and Sverdlovsk regions, the Republic of Tatarstan, and Moscow. The study did not aim to diagnose changes in the physical condition of children, but first of all, the assessment of the Project by the main social customer - parents of children with mental disabilities was important to us.

Research results and conclusions. Classes under the Inclusive Sports for All program had a huge impact on the child's development in three areas: physical, personal and social. We proposed a set of measures for the further development of the inclusive sports model: 1) Developing a system of meanings for the parents of partners, disseminating key messages among them explaining the essence and social effects of their children's participation in inclusion; 2) Developing support measures for coaches working with children with mental disabilities; 3) Implementing individual elements of a person-oriented approach for all inclusion participants.

Keywords: *model of inclusiveness, people with disabilities, mental disorders, the project "Inclusive Sports for All", effects of the project implementation, Special Olympics Russia.*

Relevance. Today, the state and society have become the guarantor of social support for people with disabilities, taking on the responsibility for creating conditions for their full life, education, family well-being, development of individual and personal potential, professional training and adaptation to public life. The well-being of a child with disabilities in the family has a huge impact on his development. Under the general name "family of a child with disabilities" are united families with different educational potential and performing various functions in the field of family education of children from 0 to 18 years old with deviations in physical and (or) mental development [2].

Modern approaches to social rehabilitation involve the formation of a tolerant attitude towards vulnerable

categories of citizens within the framework of various social institutions, organizations and long-term programs. The changes have led to increased inclusion and regulatory support for its development in many areas of life, stimulating the development of public relations, expressed in the emergence of new forms and directions of social policy concerning the integration, rehabilitation and support of special people [3, 4].

The need to institutionalize inclusion, the transition from informal interactions and unorganized activities to the creation of organizational hierarchies and regulation of relevant work, as well as the legal registration of inclusive processes, has set the task of technological support for changes before science and practice. This includes the development and implementation of



modern technologies and mechanisms for interaction between all interested parties [2].

In this context, it is necessary to recognize the enormous socio-cultural potential of physical education and sports activities, which, by their nature, are designed to compensate for the missing conditions for the personal development of individuals with disabilities, to create additional space for their creative self-realization and self-expression, and to help them solve current life problems.

In this direction, the leading role was taken by Special Olympics Russia, which designated the creation of an inclusive environment and the formation of an inclusive culture in society as the main priorities of its activities. Systematically moving towards the set goal, the movement has already adapted a significant part of the proposed social and sports programs to the requests and needs of its participants, offering inclusive formats for their implementation [1].

Special Olympics Russia, with the support of the Vladimir Potanin Charitable Foundation, is implementing the Inclusive Sports for All Project in 15 regions, aimed at promoting the values and approaches of social inclusion through sporting events with the joint participation of amateur athletes (partners) and participants with mental disabilities (athletes).

Purpose of the study: identifying the social effects of the project "Inclusive Sports for All", implemented by the Special Olympics Russia based on the results of a sociological survey of parents.

Methodology and organization of the research. As part of the sociological study, a survey was conducted of the main social customer of the project - parents (743 respondents) and guardians of athletes (100 respondents) with mental disabilities in the Ivanovo, Kostroma and Sverdlovsk regions, the Republic of Tatarstan, and Moscow. The study did not aim to diagnose changes in the physical condition of children, but first of all, the assessment of the Project by the main social customer - parents of children with mental disabilities was important to us.

Research results and their discussion. Based on the survey results, three groups of effects of the project implementation were identified:

- physical and spatial (improving physical condition, coordination, increasing freedom of movement);
- personal (increasing self-esteem);
- social (improving communication and social skills).

A survey of athletes' parents showed that sport is the most common additional activity in the lives of participants - children with mental disabilities.

Russian society is accustomed to children being surrounded by attention and immersed in numerous activities. However, as the study showed, the life of children with mental disabilities is rather poor, and most of them do not engage in any additional activities by default. The high involvement of the surveyed children in sports, as will be shown below, is the result of the implementation of the project "Inclusive Sports for All".

It is noteworthy that the involvement of children in sports is not 100%, but 85%, although only parents of children participating in the project "Inclusive Sports for All" took part in the survey. 15% are spectators who attend competitions but do not take part in training. And some of them, as shown by the analysis of the answers to open questions, do play sports as part of the program, but parents simply do not associate these activities with sports training.

As the survey showed, in the lives of a significant number of children, although not the majority (41%) of children with mental disabilities - participants in the project - sport first appeared with the project "Inclusive Sport for All".

Thus, the project fulfills an important social function of introducing children to sports, and directly to classes in equipped halls with professional trainers, bypassing the "yard" level, which is inaccessible for most children with mental disabilities.

Analysis of the answers to the question: "What are the main changes in your child's condition over the past year thanks to inclusive training and competitions under the Special Olympics Russia programs?" the majority of parents answered - "Health and physical condition" (more than 400 answers), in second place - "Social relationships and skills" (more than 300 answers) and third place is - the child's personal sphere (more than 250 answers).

In response to an open question about the impact of the Inclusive Sports for All project on a child, the most popular options were: "Runs faster, jumps better"; "Gets sick less"; "Started communicating with other children"; "Strives to achieve results"; "Started to control himself".

In general, the parents' responses are optimistic, which, in our opinion, is connected with the real positive changes that have occurred in their child during



the year of participation in the “Inclusive Sports for All” project.

Among the factors of changes in the condition of their child, identified by respondents, sport is the leader in all parameters. This is due to the fact that only those areas of manifestation of changes were selected for the survey, where sport is the leading factor of influence. It is possible that other changes occurred with the child during the period under study, caused by other reasons, but this study is not aimed at monitoring the condition of children, but at identifying the results of the implementation of a specific project.

A factor comparable in importance to sports has been identified – joint leisure time with parents; in other areas its influence may be stronger.

Thus, inclusive sports activities made a significant, and in some cases decisive, contribution to the child's development in three areas. It is appropriate to consider the effects of the project in each of them.

Parents value the contribution of inclusive sports to the dynamics of their child's physical condition most highly.

- 89% reported that the child's physical condition improved over the year, 71% noted that inclusive sports classes influenced the improvement of physical condition.

- An improvement in five basic physical abilities is also noted, with flexibility being named the least confidently (61%), and endurance being the most confidently named (80%).

- The project contributed to the growth of children's spatial freedom. 71% of parents noted that their children began to spend more time outside the home, 69% reported that sports influenced this. It can be said that children began to leave their homes more often. Thus, the training hall within the framework of the project “Inclusive Sports for All” is a new significant place in the life of a child.

The contribution of the program to improving social relationships, according to parents, is very high, but less than to physical condition.

- 88% of parents report improved relationships between children and other people, but only 55% acknowledge the contribution of inclusive sports.

- The impact of the project on the development of social skills is not considered to be so significant - 86% of parents noted an improvement in communication skills, and 39% noted the contribution of inclusive sports.

- Thanks to the project, the children's social circle has expanded significantly. Many of them have made new adult acquaintances (79% noted an increase in the number of contacts with adults, the contribution of inclusive sports is 51%), to which the overwhelming majority of parents have a positive attitude (94%). 70% of new adults in the children's lives are coaches, project volunteers and employees of the Special Olympics Russia.

The contribution of inclusive sports to changes in the personal sphere is assessed by parents as high, but significantly lower than in other spheres. Perhaps, changes in it as a whole are more significantly influenced by the maturation of the child.

- 87% of parents noted an improvement in the psychological state of athletes, 50% reported that sport influenced the improvement.

- 82% observe an increase in children's self-esteem, with inclusive sports contributing in 45% of cases.

- The range of interests expanded for 83% of children, the contribution of inclusive sports was 36%, which means that inclusive sports are of significant, but not the main importance in the lives of most athletes.

In addition to assessing the changes in children's lives associated with the project, changes in the lives of the parents themselves were identified, according to their own opinion.

- Children's successes inspire parents, 90% of respondents reported that they feel proud that their child takes part in inclusive training and competitions;

- there is an impact on personal life - 64% of respondents reported an improvement in family relationships over the year, 68% noted the impact of inclusive sports that the child is involved in;

- The project had a dual effect on parents' time budget - 43% had more free time, 36% - less. There are probably two strategies for participating in the project: an active one, in which the parent plays an active role, and the “give the child up and forget” strategy.

The disadvantages and negative effects of the project occupy a minor place, but negative aspects are noted for each research question.

Conclusion. Thus, the classes under the Inclusive Sports for All program had a huge impact on the child's development in three areas: physical, personal and social. We have proposed a set of measures for the further development of the inclusiveness model in sports: 1) Developing a system of meanings for



the parents of partners, disseminating key messages among them explaining the essence and social effects of their children's participation in inclusion; 2) Developing measures to support coaches working with children with mental disabilities; 3) Implementing individual elements of a person-oriented approach for all participants in inclusion.

References

1. Lebedev, E.V., Parfenova L.A. The Role of Special Olympics in Training Personnel for the Rehabilitation of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities - Physical Culture: Upbringing, Education, Training. 2022. No. 6. P. 66-68.
2. Parfenova, L.A., Gerasimov E.A. Inclusive technologies of physical education and sports activities of students with intellectual disabilities - Teoriya i praktika fizicheskoy kultury. 2019. No. 1. P. 13.
3. Parfenova, L.A., Lebedev E.V., Tsukhlov N.A. Concept of the educational strategy of the Special Olympics of Russia - Teoriya i praktika fizicheskoy kultury. 2022. No. 2. P. 85.
4. Petrova, E.A., Kozyakov R.V., Potashova I.I. Modern technologies of work with families with children with disabilities - Collection of materials of the Annual international scientific and practical conference "Education and training of young children". 2016. No. 5. URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/sovremennye-tehnologii-raboty-s-semyami-imeyuschimi-detey-s-ogranichennymi-vozmozhnostyami-zdorovya> (date of access: 10.02.2025).