Knoxville DisABILITIES Day Programs
Alex Schnelle, Leah Pedro, Lindy Yang, Richard Pugh, and Tyler Shrive
The University of Tennessee
Howard Baker Public Policy Challenge
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Executive Summary

The Problem
Persons with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities (IDD) have a limited amount of resources available to them in the Knoxville community. The problem affects young adults with autism that are out of high school and have an IQ above 70. Parents of these individuals are desperate for affordable services that help integrate them into the community beyond high school.

The Tennessee Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities coordinates services for Tennessee residents with disabilities. Their services are primarily offered through three waivers, which offer a variety of services for persons with IDD’s. To be eligible to receive a waiver, persons with disabilities must have an IQ of 70 or lower. A large population of persons with disabilities who have an IQ above a 70 are excluded from these services.

Solution
Knoxville DisABILITIES day programs will provide various opportunities for these individuals to have a place to gather and thrive in a community setting. Knoxville DisABILITIES day programs will be offered by the Knoxville Parks and Recreation Department and will consist of weekly programs for individuals with IDD’s. Knoxville DisABILITIES day programs will initially be offered on Saturdays and activities will include exercise and fitness classes, art, sign language, drama, karaoke, swimming, drama club, field trips, and training for Special Olympic competitions. Facilitators will include members of the University of Tennessee Best Buddies chapter and special education majors. An application will be required for admission into the program, but IQ scores will not be used to determine eligibility. Rather, individuals will be eligible with a self-identified IDD and an age above 18.

Action Plan
Success of this program will require the collaboration between the Knoxville Parks and Recreation Department to provide facilities, Best Buddies and Special Education Majors at the University of Tennessee to provide facilitation and volunteers, the Knoxville Area Transit Service Life program to provide transportation, and Knoxville Special Olympics. We have already secured a partnership with the Knoxville Parks and Recreation Department, and they have agreed to lend the necessary space on a weekly basis. In addition, the Center for Leadership and Service at the University of Tennessee has agreed to help market the opportunity to students.

Once the Knoxville Parks and Recreation Department assigns specific facilities to be used, the Best Buddies coordinator will work with the director to assign facilitators for each program. A marketing plan will be initiated to inform citizens in the community through Knoxville schools, other organizations who work with our target population, and the Tennessee Department of IDD.

Impact
No longer will a mother or father have to worry about how they will find ways to get their son or daughter active in the community. Rather, they will always have an answer: Knoxville DisABILITIES day programs.
Problem Statement

The Problem
Persons with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities (IDD) have a limited amount of resources available to them in the Knoxville community. The problem affects most specifically young adults with autism that are out of high school and have an IQ above 70. In the United States alone, it is estimated that 1 in 68 people have an autism spectrum disorder. Evaluating the city of Knoxville, it can be estimated that over 2,700 people have an autism spectrum disorder.¹ This estimate does not include the wide array of other disabilities included in the umbrella of intellectual and developmental disabilities such as mental retardation, down syndrome, cerebral palsy, and many more, which would only broaden the impact of Knoxville DisABILITIES day programs.

The Tennessee Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities coordinates services for Tennessee residents with disabilities. Their services are primarily offered through three waivers, which offer a variety of services for persons with IDD's including day employment, residential, personal assistance, behavior, and day services. To be eligible to receive a waiver, persons with disabilities must have an IQ of 70 or lower.² A large population of persons with disabilities who have an IQ above a 70 are excluded from these services. While an exact figure is not known, it is estimated that over 30% of individuals with autism have an IQ above 70.³

Implications
There are many organizations and programs in Knoxville that work with individuals with IDD's including Best Buddies at the University of Tennessee, Breakthrough of Knoxville, disABILITY Resource Center, Evergreen Life Services, the Sertoma Center, and more. While these organizations offer a wide array of services for this population, young adults who have an IQ above 70 are unable to derive the benefits of most of the aforementioned services.

The Knoxville Parks and Recreation Department hosts weekly athletic activities geared towards our target population. Since the development of these athletic programs, the Department has partnered with some of the previously mentioned local organizations. Two issues arise out of this partnership:
1) the lack of transportation
2) the inability of the Department to reach individuals who are not affiliated with the existing organizations

³ "IQ in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders: Data from the SpecialNeeds and Autism Project," Cambridge University Press, 2011,
Alternative Solutions

Policy Alternatives
We explored four potential policy solutions:

1) The first option includes allowing the current status quo to be maintained.
2) The second option is to reinforce current programs and urge these programs to reach out to individuals who suffer from IDD but have an IQ above 70.
3) The third alternative is to completely overhaul the way individuals with IDD qualify for benefits.
4) Finally, we developed a unique policy solution called Knoxville DisABILITIES day programs. The structure of the proposed policy it is the only plausible option from an implementation standpoint and a financial standpoint.

First Policy Alternative
There are many organizations in East Tennessee that are involved with providing services to individuals with IDD’s such as Best Buddies at the University of Tennessee, Autism Society of East TN, Breakthrough of Knoxville, Disability Resource Center, and the Sertoma Center. However, these organizations are neglecting a significant portion of the IDD community. This is a result of a lack of resources to properly assist all individuals that suffer from IDD. This point is further made by the Tennessee Autism Summit Team who stated, “Currently, there are no home and community-based waiver supports for individuals with ASD who have IQ’s over 70, and a waiting list of nearly 7,000 for individuals with IQs under 70.”

Second Policy Alternative
The second policy alternative is to reinforce the existing structure that deals with supporting the IDD community. The Tennessee Autism Summit Team has worked on this direction of policy exclusively. They recommend that training and support be expanded for health care practitioners in order to develop and improve their ability to serve individuals, develop a flexible program that will assist individuals in the long term, expand access to information and promote insurance reform, and be knowledgeable about the rapidly changing medical practices involved with treating individuals with ASD. The idea behind this direction is that if the system as a whole is made more efficient then more individuals will be able to receive assistance. However, this policy path alone would still exclude many individuals who are in need of assistance but have an IQ above 70.

Third Policy Alternative
The policy alternative that is the least plausible but would fix the policy

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problem as a whole involves changing the way individuals with IDD qualify for benefits. The current policy problem is that many individuals are in need of disability assistance and are unable to qualify for this assistance because they have the “wrong” disability. The state of Tennessee recognizes that individuals who have an IQ below 70 are eligible for many of these assistance resources and programs. However, the IQ standard is flawed because it disqualifies many individuals that do not suffer from mental retardation but still require assistance especially, individuals with autism. It has been illustrated that over half of individuals who suffer from autism have an IQ above 70. The idea behind this policy would be to develop a more accurate measure in identifying individuals who are in need of assistance. This solution would be the most difficult to implement due to the lack of support for health care reform in Tennessee. The more information that is discovered about individuals with IDD will result in more awareness; however, in the near future, major health care reform appears doubtful.

DisABILITIES day programs is the best solution. Instead of taking a top down approach to this issue, Knoxville DisABILITIES is a bottom up program. Essentially, if this program can gain traction locally it would be more likely that other areas would want to emulate the program. The advantages to this program include that it does not require legislative approval and it requires little to no funding. Knoxville DisABILITIES program is the best chance at implementing policy that would provide individuals with IDD the social interaction they desperately need.

Barriers to Solutions
The main opposition for existing policy and programs is funding. There are many programs in place that could potentially assist in alleviating this problem but the lack of funding impedes these organizations and programs from being as efficient as they potentially could be. This also reflects a lack of priority of the state, which causes the lower funding.

It may be impossible to solve this problem through overarching statewide policy due to budget restrictions. Instead, a program such as Knoxville DisABILITIES day programs may be most efficient. If this program could be solved at the local level in Knoxville with limited resources and the help of volunteers then a truly viable solution can be reached without being dependent on state finances.

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Policy Solution

The Solution
Through Knoxville DisABILITIES, young adults above the age of 18 with intellectual and developmental disabilities will be enabled to participate in weekly programs with an array of activities. Many adults with these Intellectual and/ or Developmental Disabilities have difficulty with community involvement beyond high school, oftentimes because opportunities are limited due to capacity and funding. Fifty-four percent of those with autism spectrum disorders have an IQ of less than seventy, however thirty percent have an IQ meeting average or above average requirements. For many young adults, their IQ prevents them from taking part in programs generated for autism spectrum disorders. These programs often have a filter of IQ levels below seventy because there are many young adults trying to participate and not enough spots.

With the creation of this program we would eventually be able to create more sports and social events throughout the week for the young adults to participate in. Basing off a similar program founded in Nashville, Metro Parks Disabilities Day Programs, we will implement each activity over a period of months to years depending on the specific program. By using similar resources we will be able to implement a similar program to the one found in Nashville. The disabilities program in Nashville is run by Metro Parks and partners up with local agencies. We hope to emulate in Knoxville many of the partnerships established with local agencies in Nashville program. By using our local resources here in Knoxville, Special Olympics of Knoxville, Best Buddies of University of Tennessee, and Knoxville Area Transit’s (KAT) Lift, which is a service for those persons who are unable to use regular fixed-route buses, we will be able to facilitate transportation as well as a wide range of volunteers from UT Knoxville’s college campus, as well as active community members.

As programs are already in place in Knoxville, our program will enable a new subgroup of Knoxville citizens affected by Autism to participate in art, exercise and fitness classes, field trips, and many other activities. The ability for KAT to provide transportation will allow parents to foster participation easier, as they will not have to schedule around the events. KAT’s LIFT program allows for persons with disabilities to around the Knoxville area without having the restriction of a specified bus route. Though parents will not have to worry about transportation for each program, there will be family events such as bowling days, swim days, and various holiday festivals to bring together families affected by Autism with the members of their own family. In addition to this, the people of Knoxville affected by Autism and similar disabilities will have the opportunity to get to know families experiencing the same hardships and joys in the community. DisABILITIES will provide more extensive programs for a larger target population in Knoxville.

Currently the Knoxville Parks and Recreation has small programs that address similar issues. This Department only has the capacity to offer services
Policy Solution

through a partnership with existing organizations who offer services to this population, though. The two problems that arise from this relationship is that the existing organizations are offering this service in competition with their own services, and it still only reaches a subgroup of the entire Autistic population.

Our program would extend the program to a larger range of adults affected by different types of disabilities. Through the implementation of the program, we would be able to expand the choices of events, giving them more options and opportunities to participate and socialize. Simple chances to meet others and be in fellowship with people in similar situations may seem minute, but they will greatly impact the participants and advance their social network to provide lasting and more importantly valuable connections.

Though Knoxville Parks and Recreation already has existing programs in place, we plan to expand on these few programs with the mentality that they are open to a wider range of autistic adults, with a variance in levels of IQ. With guidance from the program director of Nashville’s disability program under the Nashville Parks and Recreation Umbrella, we will begin with increased involvement in Special Olympic training, as well as day programs on Saturdays throughout the year, then expand those programs throughout the week. DisABILITIES will also promote family events throughout the year, to unite families and anchor them to the community. Through volunteers in Best Buddies Knoxville, Best Buddies at The University of Tennessee, as well as college and community volunteers we will be able to create a program large enough to foster meaningful relationships among special needs adults and their families across Knoxville.
Action Plan

Required Steps in Implementation
The first action to initiate this plan will be to implement a program by the Knoxville Parks and Recreation Department to offer a weekly Saturday program for individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. The programming would begin at 9:00 am and end at 3:00 pm. Activities will include exercise and fitness classes, art, sign language, drama, karaoke, swimming, drama club, field trips, and training for Special Olympic competitions. An application will be required for admission into the program, but IQ scores will not be used to determine eligibility.

Once the Knoxville Parks and Recreation Department assigns specific facilities to be used, the Best Buddies coordinator will work with the director to assign facilitators for each program. A marketing plan will be initiated to inform citizens in the community through Knoxville schools, other organizations who deal with the same constituency, and the Tennessee Department of IDD.

Stakeholder Analysis
Beneficiaries of this program will include individuals with IDD's in the Knoxville community and their families. Since this policy is directed towards reaching a population whose needs aren't currently being met, it will take a targeted and strategic marketing campaign to reach our target population. The marketing plan will consist of the following:

- Public service announcements through local Knoxville radio stations
- Dissemination of brochures and flyers at existing organizations who work with our target population such as Sertoma Center, Autism Society of East Tennessee, Breakthrough Knoxville, and Knoxville Center for Autism
- Dissemination of brochures and flyers at local Knoxville schools
- Dissemination of brochures and flyers at local doctor offices
- Social media marketing on all relevant Knoxville pages
- Letter writing campaign to target populations

Other stakeholders of this program include Knoxville Parks and Recreation Department, Best Buddies of University of Tennessee, Special Education Majors at University of Tennessee, Knoxville Area Transit, Center for Leadership and Service at the University of Tennessee, and Knoxville Special Olympics. A relationship has been established with Knoxville Parks and Recreation Department, and they are very interested in forming a partnership and bettering relations with the University of Tennessee. They see Knoxville DisABILITIES programs as a way to bridge that gap and partner together to help our target population.

Budget
The budget required for implementation of Knoxville DisABILITIES day programs is minimal. A detailed program budget can be found in Appendix I. Since this is a volunteer based program and many of the necessary components have already been donated in-kind, funds will be required for activity supplies, special trips, special speakers/facilitators, etc. Our hope is that if the program is successful, the community will see how beneficial the program is, and it will morph into a four to five day a week program with funding from the local government or state.
Action Plan

Timeline:

Phase 1 - Form Key Partnerships:
- Meet with the Knoxville Parks and Recreation Department to establish a relationship and secure facilities (complete)
- Meet with UT Knoxville Best Buddies chapter to affirm interest and ongoing participation
- Meet with the Center for Leadership and Service at University of Tennessee to establish a relationship and develop an information dissemination plan (complete)
- Meet with Knoxville Area Transit Lift program to establish a relationship and secure transportation
- Meet with Knoxville Special Olympics to establish a relationship and partnership

Phase 2 - Marketing and Logistics:
- Marketing of volunteer opportunities to Best Buddies and Special Education majors at the University of Tennessee, and other community volunteers
- Assignment of specific facilities by Knoxville Parks and Recreation Department
- Secure volunteers for the first six months of the program to ensure that there is at least one volunteer per five to seven individuals with IDD’s
- Secure weekly transportation from the Knoxville Area Transit Service Life program to provide transportation to and from DisABILITIES programs
- Initiate a marketing campaign to disseminate information about the program to Knoxville residents through partnerships with other like-minded organizations, community leaders, and Knoxville schools

Phase 3 - Training and Implementation:
- Host a training session with facilitation leaders to ensure that the mission, goal, and intent of the programs is understood
- Host the first Knoxville DisABILITIES program on July 30, 2016, or when there is adequate support if that is sooner
- Implement weekly day programs following the success of Saturday day programs at the beginning of 2017

Phase 4 - Evaluation
- Implement evaluative criteria to determine effectiveness of the day programs and evaluate changes and improvements to be made moving forward
Appendix

Appendix I: Budget

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Appendix I: Budget

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<th>Knoxville DisABILITIES Day Programs Budget</th>
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<td>Sports Materials</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arts and Craft Supplies**</td>
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<td>**TOTAL:</td>
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*Marketing Materials: Including public service announcement through radio stations, brochures, flyers, letter writing campaign, and social media

**Arts and Craft Supplies: Including paints, paper, glue, and other materials used for arts and craft activities during the day programs