



Frequently Asked Questions

Please scroll to find the responses that best fit you.

I am a high school or college student interested in learning more about special recreation associations and career opportunities.

- **What is an SRA?**

A special recreation association (SRA) is a cooperative formed by 2 or more park district or municipalities who have joined together to provide recreation for their residents with disabilities.

- **I'd like to gain some experience working with people with disabilities? How can I get started?**

Pursuing part-time employment or volunteer work at a special recreation association is a great way to get started! SRAs provide recreation services to a variety of age groups, in a variety of settings, to a variety people with disabilities.

- **What are the qualifications to work part-time at an SRA?**

For those looking for part-time employment, experience is always helpful, but not necessary. Working or volunteering at an SRA is a wonderful way to gain experience. Having the desire to work with people with disabilities and work in a team like environment is required. Staff must be able to provide their own transportation to and from programs. Those pursuing volunteer or work part-time employment will be required to complete an application form, including a criminal background check, and attend an interview and orientation.

- **Are there volunteer opportunities?**

SRAs welcome individual volunteers, groups, service organizations and businesses to volunteer for programs, special events and fundraising events. Contact your local SRA and ask to speak with the volunteer coordinator to find out the age requirements and opportunities.

- **Where are the SRAs located and who do I contact?**

Click on “Find my Services” on the home page and look up your community alphabetically. All of the special recreation cooperatives are listed along with their address, phone number and web address. Simply call or connect with your special recreation association using their web site for detailed information. If you do not find your community listed, check other communities near you.

- **What types of part-time jobs are available?**

Part-time jobs are available seasonally for recreation leaders to work in weekly programs and special events. Also, inclusion aids are hired to work with people with disabilities who register for park district/village programs. During the summer months, day camp staff are needed for day camps. To find out more about the various the positions available at specific SRAs, contact your local SRA. (Click on “Find My Services” at the main menu).

- **What kind of experience would I gain?**

As a part-time leader or volunteer you will gain experience working with a variety of disabilities, in a number of different recreation activities at various community locations. You will work as a team with other staff members to provide enjoyable, safe recreation programs. You will learn about organizational skills, leadership skills, problem solving and behavior management.

- **How many hours are available for a part-time employees and volunteers?**

The number of hours a person volunteers or works depends on your schedule and the number of hours that you are available to work. Some staff work as little as one or two hours per week, others work 20 or 30 hours per week. Contact your local SRA to find out what opportunities are available.

- **What is the rate of pay?**

The rate of pay starts at minimum wage for those that do not have previous experience working with people with disabilities. The rate of pay increases with those individuals with prior experience working with people with disabilities. Depending on the SRA, the rate of pay may increase for those with current certification in CPR, first aid, life guarding, Water Safety Instruction, Special Olympics Coaching Certifications, CPI, and Commercial Drivers License. Contact your local SRA to find out what the rate of pay is based on your experience.

- **When can I get started?**

Because of the vast amount of programming going on year round – most SRAs are continually hiring part-time staff and are always in need of volunteers! You will be required to complete an application form, attend an interview and an orientation program. Once that's complete you can get started!

- **I'm new at this! What kind of training would I receive?**

You will receive training through an orientation program required prior to the start of the program session. On-going training continues to take place as you gain experience through the observations of other staff and learn how to handle certain situations. Part-time staff are supervised by a full-time SRA staff member who will be happy to provide you with guidance and additional resources as necessary.

- In addition to the hands-on experience I would gain as a part-time staff member, what else can I do to get prepared for this field?

If you are interested in pursuing a career in Therapeutic Recreation and wish to work in a community-based setting such as an SRA, then there is a lot you can do to get prepared! First, start by becoming involved in a lot of different sports and activities. Learn to swim! Learn to bowl! Learn to roller skate, ice skate and cook! Go to the SRA web sites and take a look at their seasonal brochures on-line. Note the variety of program selections and begin to receive training in these types of activities. Involvement in Special Olympics tournaments and games is a popular choice for the individuals served in SRAs, so if you have an opportunity to volunteer in Special Olympics, that is also great experience for you. In addition to learning how to implement the recreational activities, you should get started obtaining safety certifications such as CPR, First Aid, Water Safety Instruction and Lifeguarding. Learning sign language is helpful as well. Last, select a college that provides a major in Therapeutic Recreation.

- What colleges and universities offer Therapeutic Recreation?

This web site provides a list of schools that are offering Therapeutic Recreation as a major. Go to: www.recreationtherapy.com .

- Is a field work experience or an internship required?

Those that select Therapeutic Recreation as a career choice will be required to complete a fieldwork experience or practicum. The fieldwork and practicum requirements vary with each school. An internship is also required and includes a minimum of 12 weeks or 480 hours to obtain certification in Therapeutic Recreation. To learn more about certification in therapeutic recreation, visit www.nctrc.org . Many SRAs accept interns in other fields as well such as music therapy, art therapy, and marketing and communication. Contact the SRA of your choice to learn more about their internship and field work opportunities. You may also visit this web site for listings. Go to the main menu and select jobs and internships.

- What are the career opportunities available?

Most students in Therapeutic Recreation who are hired to work at an SRA will start their career in an entry level position. These job titles vary for each agency, but are typically the staff members that run the recreation programs and are involved in direct leadership. Good, strong leadership skills are desired. Coordinators and manager positions require individuals with some prior full-time experience. Good organizational, time management and public speaking skills are desired. Superintendent and Director positions require several years of full-time experience. To view examples of career opportunities that are currently available, select “Jobs and Internships” at the SRANI main menu. Jobs are also posted at the Illinois Park and Recreation web site. Visit www.ilipra.org for career opportunities. (Click on Resources/Job Opportunities). Also, check each SRA’s web site as many post their job opportunities on-line. Viewing these three web sites should give you a good idea of the types of careers that are available. Some SRAs hire individuals with degrees in related fields and may include music therapists, art therapists and special education teachers. Those with marketing and communication degrees are also considered for some positions.

I am a parent, looking for opportunities for my high school or college aged child to work with people with disabilities.

- What are the qualifications needed to work at a special recreation association?

For those looking for part-time employment, experience is always helpful, but not necessary. Working or volunteering at an SRA is a wonderful way to gain experience. Having the desire to work with people with disabilities and work in a team like environment is desirable. Staff must be able to provide their own transportation to and from programs. To volunteer or work part-time you will be required to complete an application form, attend an interview and an orientation.

- Where are the special recreation associations located and who do I contact?

Go to the main menu and click on “Find My Services” for an SRA directory; complete with web site access, contact names and a listing of the communities served. Have your child contact the local SRA to begin the application process.

- What kind of experience would my child gain?

Your child would gain valuable experience and life skills. Even if they decide not to pursue

a career in Therapeutic Recreation, the experience will be valuable. As a part-time leader or volunteer your child will gain experience working with a variety of disabilities, in a number of different kinds of recreation programs at various community locations. They will work as a team with other staff members to provide enjoyable, safe recreation programs. They will learn about organizational skills, leadership skills, problem solving.

- **What types of part-time jobs are available?**

Part-time jobs are available seasonally for recreation leaders to work in weekly programs and special events. Also, inclusion aids are hired to work with people with disabilities who register for a park district or village recreation department's programs. During the summer months, day camp staff are recruited. To find out more about the various the positions available at specific SRAs, contact your local SRA. (Click on "Find My Services" at the main menu).

- **My child is very busy with school and extracurricular activities. How many hours would my child work per week?**

The number of hours a person works depends on their schedule and the number of hours that they are available to work. Some staff work as little as one or two hours per week, others work 20 or 30 hours per week. You may want to contact your local SRA to find out what opportunities are available.

- **My child has never worked with people with disabilities, but I think he/she would be good at it. What kind of training would he/she receive?**

Your child will receive training through an orientation program required prior to the start of the program session. Part-time staff are supervised by a full-time SRA staff member or a part-time program supervisor who will provide guidance and additional resources as necessary.

- What else can I do to help my child prepare to work at a special recreation association?

If your child is interested in pursuing a career in Therapeutic Recreation and has the desire to work in a community-based setting such as an SRA, then there is a lot you can do to help get your child prepared. Go to the SRA web sites and take a look at their seasonal brochures on-line. Note the variety of program selections and help your child get involved in these types of activities. These are the types of activities that someday they will be instructing. Involvement in Special Olympics tournaments and games is a popular choice for the individuals served in SRAs, so if you have an opportunity to volunteer in Special Olympics, that is also great experience for you. Parents are encouraged to volunteer too! In addition to learning how to becoming involved in a variety of recreational activities and doing volunteer work, encourage your child to obtain safety certifications such as CPR, First Aid, Water Safety Instruction and Lifeguarding. Learning sign language is helpful as well. Last, select a college that provides a major in Therapeutic Recreation.

- What colleges and universities offer Therapeutic Recreation?

This web site provides a list of schools that are offering Therapeutic Recreation as a major. Go to www.recreationtherapy.com

I am a college student interested in majoring in Therapeutic Recreation.

- I want to change or select my major to Therapeutic Recreation. How do I get started?

First, check with your college to see if they offer the program. This web site provides a list of Illinois schools that are offering Therapeutic Recreation as a major. Go to www.recreationtherapy.com

- Are field work experiences and/or internships required?

Yes. Students majoring in Therapeutic Recreation are required to complete a field work experience, or practicum in addition to a 12-week/480 hour internship under the supervision of a CTRS (Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist.) To learn more about certification in therapeutic recreation, visit www.nctrc.org . Some SRAs accept interns from other fields

such as music therapy, art therapy, marketing and communications, or related fields. Students will need to contact an SRA of your choice to inquire about the fieldwork/internship opportunities and the hiring time frames.

- **How do I get in contact with the special recreation associations in my area?**

Click on “Find my Services” on the home page to look up your community alphabetically. All of the special recreation cooperatives are listed along with their address, phone number and web address. Simply call or connect with your special recreation association using their web site for detailed information.

- **What else can I do to prepare for a career in therapeutic recreation?**

If you are interested in perusing a career in Therapeutic Recreation and wish to work in a community-based setting such as an SRA, then there is a lot you can do to get prepared! First, start by becoming involved in a lot of different sports and activities. Learn to swim! Learn to bowl! Learn to roller skate, ice skate and cook! Go to the SRA web sites and take a look at their seasonal brochures on-line. Note the variety of program selections and begin to receive training in these types of activities. Involvement in Special Olympics tournaments and games is a popular choice for the individuals served in SRAs, so if you have an opportunity to volunteer in Special Olympics, that is also great experience for you. Next, In addition to learning how to do the recreational activities, you should get started obtaining safety certifications such as CPR, First Aid, Water Safety Instruction and Lifeguarding. Learning sign language is helpful as well. Last, contact your local SRA to receive information about part-time employment during school breaks.

I am looking for an internship or fieldwork at a special recreation association.

- **Are there special recreation associations in my area and who do I contact?**

Click on “Find my Services” on the home page and look up your community alphabetically. All of the special recreation cooperatives are listed along with their address, phone number and web address. Simply call or connect with your special recreation association using their web site for detailed information.

- **How do I know if the intern supervisor is NCTRC certified?**

When interns apply at SRAs they should inquire about the certification status of the intern supervisor. You may ask for a copy of their certification certificate and confirm their certification number with NCTRC.

- **Is housing provided?**

Housing is not provided. Some SRAs may provide assistance with finding housing or put you in contact with other interns from other SRAs who are completing an internship at the same time.

- **Is there a stipend or salary?**

Yes. The stipend is approximately \$125/week, but varies with each SRA, so contact the SRA of your choice to inquire about their stipend.

- **Do I need to provide my own transportation?**

Yes. Interns need to have a valid driver's license and must have a vehicle.

- **Can interviews be conducted over the phone?**

Face to face interviews are preferred so that perspective interns can meet the people they will be working with and get a good idea of the community in which they will be working. In some cases a phone interview may be scheduled. Contact the SRA of your choice to inquire.

- **Can I continue working part-time in my current job while completing my internship?**

Because interns are required to complete 480 hours in 12 weeks, this amounts to a 40-hour work week. It's a full time job! Having a part-time job on the side may prohibit interns from reaching their full potential. Therefore, in most cases, an additional part-time job is not manageable.

- **Are there internship opportunities for people in other fields?**

Yes. SRAs hire interns in other fields as well and this includes music therapists, art therapists and other related fields that service individuals with disabilities. Interns in marketing and communication are also welcome.

- **Does the special recreation association follow the NCTRC guidelines and standards for certification?**

All the SRAs follow the NCTRC guidelines and standards required for certification in Therapeutic Recreation. Contact the SRA of your choice for more information. The intern supervisors will send you information outlining their specific requirements and job duties.