



INTERNATIONAL SPORTS PROGRAMMING INITIATIVE: AZERBAIJAN DISABILITY SPORTS

PRESS RELEASE

The Institute for Training and Development (ITD) has been awarded a grant to conduct a project that will bring fourteen physical education teachers and disability workers from Azerbaijan to Massachusetts to collaborate in learning how to promote and adapt sports for youth with disabilities. Following the stateside program, an American counterpart delegation of six will travel to Azerbaijan.

This project is funded by SportsUnited, a division of the Bureau for Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State. It is supported by the U.S. Embassy in Baku, Azerbaijan.

ITD's Azerbaijani partner organization on this project is Sport for Development, a Baku-based non-profit organization dedicated to establishing disability sports programs.

Azerbaijani and American participants will develop "action plans", which will result in projects they implement on returning home. These projects will lead to improved access to sports for youth with disabilities, and an increased awareness among the general public of the abilities of those with disabilities.

Stateside Component (Fall 2014) During a 3-week U.S. program, Azerbaijani participants will be actively involved in learning, sports, and social activities with American counterparts and youth with disabilities. Lectures by college faculty will provide participants with U.S. historical and social background related to disability and disability sport and recreation. Discussions with disability and sports professionals will stimulate thought about public and private obligations to address this field, and about the respective value of specialized and inclusive programs. And visits to disability organizations and schools will provide direct contact with youth with disabilities and the programs that serve them.

Azerbaijan Component (Spring 2015) A U.S. counterpart delegation will travel around Azerbaijan for two weeks, engaging in activities comparable to the stateside program. The Americans will also support Azerbaijani alumni/ae in implementing their action plan projects.

By the end of this project, American and Azerbaijani participants will:

- have been exposed to a variety of disability sports professionals and organizations in one another's countries,
- have held open discussions about the rights of people with disabilities and about how to help achieve these rights,



- have experienced each other's broader culture and society,
- have developed lasting relationships within, between, and beyond the two traveling delegations,
- have developed and implemented action plan projects.

To be eligible for the U.S. program, an Azerbaijani applicant must: be a physical education teacher or a disability specialist; reside and/or work in one of the six targeted regions of the country; have a proven understanding of project goals and objectives; have an expressed commitment to carrying out project activities, including implementing an action plan project after returning from the US; be open to change; and have limited travel abroad experience and no previous participation in this type of program. English language comprehension is not required, as interpreters will be provided. U.S. participants will be selected based on similar criteria, and also on the level of their involvement in the stateside program in the fall of 2014.

Expenses for selected Azerbaijani and American participants are covered by the grant, including travel, accommodations, meals, and materials.

ITD is a not-for-profit organization based in Amherst, Massachusetts (see www.itd-amherst.org). ITD's Executive Director, Julie E. Hooks, is the Project Director and will oversee all aspects of the project. She can be reached at: [julie at itd-amherst.org](mailto:julie@itd-amherst.org).