



Recreation Therapy Specialist Reference Sheet

During your stay at Shepherd Center you may have met with a Recreation Therapy Specialist. Below is a list of specialists and some of the activities they cover. If you have questions regarding any of these areas of recreation, or if you have developed a new idea that could help future patients, please feel free to contact the appropriate specialist using the information provided.

Outdoor Specialist: (404) 350-7790

The Outdoor Specialist provides education about activities such as camping, boating, hunting, target shooting, fishing, ATV, canoeing, and kayaking.

Arts Specialist: (404) 350-7792

The Arts Specialist provides education in expressive arts such as painting, ceramics, clay work, pottery wheel, jewelry making, photography, sewing, wheelchair dance, drama, and creative and journal writing.

Exercise Specialist ProMotion: (404) 350-7789

The Exercise Specialist provides education about the importance of health and wellness, appropriate strength and cardiovascular exercises and equipment, basic adaptations for equipment, home exercise programs, and general guidelines for health and wellness.

Sports Specialist: (404) 350-7797

The Sports Specialist provides education about activities such as basketball, quad rugby, billiards, power soccer, handcycling, sled hockey, football, snow skiing, bowling, track and field, fencing, softball, golf, tennis, and bocce.

Horticulture Specialist: (404) 350-7785

The Horticulture Specialist provides education about indoor and outdoor gardening, seed propagation, flower arranging, bamboo gardens, lawn care, landscaping, raised outdoor garden beds, and horticulture crafts.

Music Specialist: (404) 603-1447

The Music Specialist provides education in the expressive arts of music such as music appreciation, composition, voice, piano, guitar, drum set, harmonica, violin, and percussion.

Aquatic Specialist: (404) 350-7786

The Aquatic Specialists provide education about activities such as water safety, swimming, water exercise, waterskiing, jet skiing, and scuba diving.



CAREGIVER ACTION NETWORK

What is CAN?

The Caregiver Action Network is the nation's leading family caregiver organization working to improve the quality of life for the than 90 million Americans who care for loved ones with chronic conditions, disabilities, disease, or the frailties of old age. CAN serves a broad spectrum of family caregivers ranging from the parents of children with special needs, to the families and friends of wounded soldiers; from a young couple dealing with a diagnosis of MS, to adult children caring for parents with Alzheimer's disease. CAN (formerly the National Family Caregivers Association) is a non-profit organization providing education, peer support, and resources to family caregivers across the country free of charge.

What Resources does CAN provide?

CAN offers a virtual library of information and educational materials ranging from national educational campaigns, to tips and tools for family caregivers, information on agencies and organizations which provide caregiver support, technology for caregivers, and workshops on effective communication.

Why Join CAN?

Members of the Caregiver Action Network can

- ▶ Connect with other family caregivers on the Forum to receive encouragement and advice
- ▶ Receive support from a CAN volunteer who can help you locate resources in your community
- ▶ Share your story to help others
- ▶ Learn about the most recent and hottest tips to help you in caregiving from a monthly e-newsletter, Take Care!

Here is a [link to join](#) for free

Contact CAN

Website: <http://caregiveraction.org/>

Phone: (202) 454-3970

General E-mail: info@caregiveraction.org

Street Address: 1130 Connecticut Ave, NW
Suite 300
Washington, DC 20036



Shepherd Center
RECREATION THERAPY



**United Spinal
Association**

Spinal Cord Resource Center

UNITED SPINAL ASSOCIATION

What is the United Spinal Association?

United Spinal has over 65 years of experience educating and empowering individuals with spinal cord injuries/diseases (SCI/D) to achieve and maintain the highest levels of independence, health and personal fulfillment. United Spinal has more than 60 local chapters and support groups nationwide, connecting people with SCI/D to their peers and fostering an expansive grassroots network that enriches lives. United Spinal Association is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life of all people living with a SCI/D, and providing them and their loved ones, care providers and professionals with needed resources. United Spinal Association believes no person should be excluded from opportunity on the basis of their disability. The goal is to provide people living with SCI/D programs and services to maximize their independence and enable them to be active in their communities.

What Resources does United Spinal Association provide?

United Spinal connects people living with SCI/D nationally and locally with more than 60 local chapters. Members benefit from the experience of others who have lived through similar challenges and have the opportunity to remain involved to share their knowledge and experience with others. Members are provided with guidance and resources on a variety of topics they are passionate about including employment, affordable housing, transportation, health care, home- and community-based independent living, education, peer support, and leisure and recreation.

Why join United Spinal Association?

Member benefits include access to

- ▶ Advice and guidance
- ▶ Advocacy and public policy
- ▶ Veterans benefits counseling
- ▶ Accessibility advocacy
- ▶ Local Chapters

Here is a [link to join](#) for free

Contact United Spinal Association

Website: <http://www.unitedspinal.org/>

Phone: (800) 404-2898

General E-mail: info@unitedspinal.org

Street Address: 120-34 Queens Blvd. #320
Kew Gardens, NY 11415



Assertiveness & Advocacy

When you encounter a problem, accessibility issue, or discrimination there are 3 ways to respond to it

1. Passive Response

- Remaining quiet about the issue
- You won't get your point across or change the problem
 - Example: Just leaving a place without talking to a manager about an accessibility problem

2. Aggressive Response

- Getting hostile, angry, offensive, sarcastic, or humiliating
- You will get your point across but the staff members are likely to get defensive and could dismiss your complaint because of your aggressive nature
 - Example: Yelling at staff or threatening a manager

3. Assertive Response

- Stating what you think, feel, and need from a manager in a polite and direct way
- You will get your point across and create an opportunity to have an honest conversation with staff about what you, and other people with a disability, need to have access to something
 - Example: Notifying a manager of a problem and suggesting a solution

This is the best response to have! The most effective way to implement a positive change is to bring a problem to the attention to someone who has authority to make changes and offer a solution.

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Steps to being Assertive

- Maintain eye contact
- Be willing to learn from the other person
- State the problem and what you believe needs to be done
- If the person does not listen, stay calm and restate the problem and what needs to be done until they listen.
- Be direct and use "I" statements
 - Example: "To use this facility, I need ____."
- Talk to someone who has authority to make changes
 - Talk to a manager instead of a sales clerk
- Be willing to make compromises

Remember:

- ▶ Nothing will change if no one says or does anything about a problem. For things to be better in the future advocates need to address problems now.
- ▶ Being aggressive is not always effective because people are generally not very willing to work with people who yells at or threatens them.
- ▶ If you say you are going to do something – follow through and do it. For example, if you tell a manager you plan to return in the future to check if something has been changed make sure to follow through and return to check on the problem.



Accessibility

Remember: most places in the community are required to be accessible under various laws

- ▶ The Americans with Disabilities Act:
 - State & public colleges & universities
 - Department of Motor Vehicles
 - Public schools
 - Banks
 - Bus & subway stations
 - Private colleges & universities
 - Gas stations
 - Grocery stores
 - Hotels
 - Libraries
 - Movie theaters
 - Parks
 - Restaurants
 - Private schools
 - Stadiums & sports arenas
- ▶ The Air Carriers Access Act
 - Airport
 - Air travel

When going out into the community, it is important to find out how accessible your destination is. Accessibility refers to how difficult or easy it is to get into a place or use the services offered there. If you are going somewhere for the first time you can often save yourself a hassle by calling ahead and asking if it is accessible.

When calling ahead

- ▶ Do not just ask, “Are you accessible?”
 - Many people do not know what components make something accessible or will assume something (like a bathroom) is accessible because it has a handicap sign on the door
- ▶ Instead ask specific questions such as
 - How wide are your doors?
 - Are there any steps up to or inside your building?
 - If yes, ask if there is a ramp or a different entrance
 - How wide is the door to your bathroom?
 - Is there accessible seating for a wheelchair?
 - Does your parking lot have handicap parking spaces?
- ▶ Do not rule a place out right away if it isn’t accessible
 - Ask to talk to a manager
 - For an immediate solution you may be able to problem solve through the accessibility barriers
 - For permanent solutions changes may need to be made to the building or bathroom
 - If a place is not currently accessible it needs to be made accessible – and that will only happen if you do something about the problem



Accessibility

Specific Issues or Questions to ask

► General Questions

- Doors: width, weight, door handle type, automatic or manual
- Steps: if there are steps – how many?
- Ramps: how steep, where are they located
- Sidewalks: are there sidewalks, width, curb cuts
- Aisle space: how wide are they – aisles could be too narrow
- Counters: height
- Tables: height, knee space underneath, space between and around tables
- Seating: accessible seating availability and location
- Elevators: location
- Display items: are they blocking any aisles
- Bar: height, possibility of fixed bar stools
- Cash registers: height width of aisle between registers
- Gas Pump: height of the pump, controls, and credit card payment system

► Playgrounds/Recreation Facilities

- Play areas: rough terrain, sidewalks, ground cover (woodchips, etc.)
- Play equipment: room between equipment, actual equipment itself
- Weight room: space between machines, type of equipment, is assistance available
- Pool area: ramp, lift into the pool, surface of pool, temperature of water
- Locker rooms: door width, door handle, aisle space, height of lockers
- Showers: size, height of controls, grab bars
- Ticket counter: height
- Concession stand: height
- Fare collection gates: turn types width of aisles

► Travel: Hotels/Airports

- Hotel room bathroom: door width, accessibility of shower, height of outlets
- Hotel cabinets: height, door handle type, drawer handle type
- Aisle between beds/furniture: width to turn
- Baggage claim/check: height, type of assistance available
- Security check – you can't go through metal detector in a wheelchair, instead there will be a physical check
- Airport trains: entrance, doors, space inside train, crowds



PROTECTING SKIN DURING ACTIVITIES

The more active you are, the healthier you will be. However, there is a chance of causing skin breakdown if proper precautions are not taken. In general, those precautions are:

- ▶ Do weight shifts!
- ▶ Always use a cushion! With the variety of regular and sports cushions it should be relatively easy to use a cushion while using sports chairs, canoes, on horseback, ATVs, and during other activities.
- ▶ Check your skin! During recreational activities you may be doing things your skin is not used to experiencing including bumpy rides, falling, different transfers, rough terrain, getting wet, etc. Whenever starting a new activity or using new equipment make sure to check your skin as soon as possible to make your skin is not affected.
- ▶ Wear shoes and socks! Most physical activity puts your feet at risk for scrapes, abrasions, bruises, or burns. Be sure to protect your feet!
- ▶ Get clean and dry! Many recreational activities can expose you to elements that can harm your skin. Take a shower to keep your skin clean and get dry as soon as possible. During activities you may get wet and stay damp for an extend period of time which can cause skin break down. Get as dry as possible as quickly as possible to prevent that.

Check your skin often! It is important to catch skin breakdown as early as possible to prevent serious skin issues.

Specific precautions to take while participating in recreational activities

ATV's

Potential Problems	Recommendations
Abrasions from brush	Wear long pants and heavy shoes
Burns from exhaust or hot pipes	Install foot plates to keep legs in place
Pressure or shearing	Use a cushion in addition to a cushioned seat, replace saddle seat with a bench seat

Barbecuing/Grilling

Potential Problems	Recommendations
Burns	Use long handled utensils and mitts. Take care not to get too close to the grill or flames



Basketball/Rugby

Potential Problems	Recommendations
Pressure/shearing	Use a cushion & do weight shifts
Bumps & bruises on legs or feet	Wear shoes, check skin often, use a Velcro strap to keep feet in place
Blisters or abrasions on hands	Use spoke guards, wear gloves, camber wheels

Boating, Canoeing, & Kayaking

Potential Problems	Recommendations
Burns transferring onto hot surfaces	Use a towel or cushion to cover the surface, use water to cool a hot surface
Abrasions or skin breakdowns	Pad off abrasive areas of equipment, try to keep sand out of clothing, rinse off, change into dry clothing as soon as possible, wear shoes
Pressure, shearing	Use a cushion, pad any part of your body that has decreased sensation that will be resting on any surface, weight shift often

Camping

Potential Problems	Recommendations
Burns from fire	Keep a distance of 6 ft from the flames, wear long pants and shoes Remember: chairs can conduct heat – make sure your chair doesn't get too warm
Pressure while sleeping	Use an air mattress and/or an egg crate, appropriate padding and turns
Insect bites	Check skin for chiggers, ticks, etc. especially in areas of decreased sensation

Cooking

Potential Problems	Recommendations
Burns from cooking or carrying hot objects	Using long handled utensils, carry hot items on a lap tray or rolling cart
Burns on legs or feet from hot pipes	Pad hot water pipes and foam

Drinking Alcohol

Potential Problem	Recommendation
Carelessness or forgetfulness	Discuss consuming alcohol with your doctor! Be sure you are safe to consume alcohol given any medications you may be taking.



Exposure to Weather

Potential Problems	Recommendations
Sunburn	Use sunblock (especially in areas not usually exposed to the sun), wear protective clothing (hats), stay in shaded areas
Frostbite	Layer clothing, keep extremities warm, wear waterproof clothing (gloves or boots) when it is raining, know the signs and symptoms of frostbite

Horseback Riding

Potential Problems	Recommendations
Abrasions	Wear long pants and shoes
Pressure & shearing	Use a cushion, do weight shifts

Hunting

Potential Problem	Recommendation
Bruises from recoil	Use recoil pads, adapt gun to pull it tightly

Mowing Lawn

Potential Problems	Recommendations
Burns from transferring to a hot surface	Use a towel or cushion to cover the hot surface
Pressure	Use a cushion in addition to cushioned seat, replace manufacturer's seat with a padded mower seat, do weight shifts
Sunburn	Use sunblock, wear protective clothing (wide brim hat, long pants, shoes)
Insect bites	Check skin for chiggers, ticks, etc. especially in areas of decreased sensation. Wear long pants and sleeves.

Road Racing/Track

Potential Problems	Recommendations
Wheel burns under armpits or upper arms	Wear upper arm pads, pad chest
Pressure & Shearing	Use a cushion, do weight shifts
Blisters & abrasions to hands	Wear gloves, camber wheels
Abrasions to feet	Wear socks/shoes, use Velcro strap to keep feet in place



Scuba Diving

Potential Problem	Recommendation
Abrasions	Wear full wetsuit or kneepads and booties

Sitting close to space heaters/fireplaces

Potential Problem	Recommendation
Burns	Keep distance of 6 ft from heaters Remember chairs can conduct heat – so make sure your chair doesn't get too hot

Sitting on a sofa

Potential Problem	Recommendation
Pressure	Use your cushion, do weight shifts, don't recline for long periods of time (unless you're turning), check skin after sitting

Studying/Desk Job

Potential Problem	Recommendation
Sores on elbows	Do not lean on elbows if you have decreased sensation, wear elbow pads

Swimming in Lakes/Rivers

Potential Problem	Recommendation
Abrasions	Be aware of the surface leading into rivers and plan entrance & exit carefully. Wear water shoes, rinse off and change into dry clothing as soon as possible.

Swimming in a Pool

Potential Problems	Recommendations
Abrasions on feet or legs	Wear water shoes or socks, be careful rubbing against rough surfaces
Bruising or shearing transfer	Use a cushion or towel during the transfer

Tennis

Potential Problems	Recommendations
Pressure & shearing	Use a cushion, do weight shifts
Scrapes and bruises on feet	Wear shoes, use Velcro strap to keep feet in place



Traveling by Car

Potential Problem	Recommendation
Pressure	Use your cushion, do weight shifts, and vary seating position. On long drives, you may need to stop in order to do weight shifts safely.

Traveling by Plane

Potential Problem	Recommendation
Pressure	Use your cushion, do weight shifts, and be cautious of using reclining position, plan well for long flight
Bruising during transfer over seat arm	Check to see if the armrest lifts up, pad the armrest

Waterskiing

Potential Problem	Recommendation
Bruises from cage	Use correct size cage, pad the cage
Bruises from skis	Raise sling away from the board

Waterbeds

Potential Problem	Recommendation
Bruising	Take care when transferring over wooden or hard surface frame, pad off the frame

Weight loss/gain

Potential Problem	Recommendation
Increased pressure in different places	Monitor your skin, you may need a new chair and/or cushion to accommodate new needs



STAYING WARM IN COLD WEATHER

After a spinal cord injury, the body may not regulate its temperature as before. This results in many people feeling cold almost all the time. This is especially true in people with quadriplegia. Reduced circulation to the limbs can result in the arms, hands, legs, and feet being cold while the rest of the body is warm. The loss of sensation and circulation can make the extremities very susceptible to cold and results in an increased risk for tissue injury or hypothermia in cold weather.

When you plan ahead and dress appropriately, you can still go out and enjoy your favorite outdoor activities in the cold weather!

Dressing for the cold: it's not how much you wear – but what you wear!

Clothes need to have an insulating factor to keep you warm

- Materials such as cotton and polyester have little or no insulating value
- Materials that are good insulators are: wool, polypropylene, fleece, Thinsulate, synthetic down and goose down, etc.
- It is better to wear one pair of wool pants than 3 or 4 pairs of cotton pants

Types of Clothing

- ▶ Insulated underwear
 - Comes in many varieties
 - Thermal knit, silk, quilted, polypropylene, wool
 - Today, polypropylene is considered the best. It is a good insulator and wicks moisture away from the body.
- ▶ Socks
 - Polypropylene socks wick moisture away from feet
 - Boot socks come in varieties of compositions from 100% wool to various wool blends
 - Some have Thinsulate insulation sewn into the fabric of the sock
- ▶ Boot Blankets
 - These are relatively new – a heavily insulated cover made to slide over your boots in the extreme cold
 - Extremely effective and slide on and off with ease
- ▶ Gloves
 - Thinsulate insulated gloves that are water repellent – available in many varieties
 - Mittens may be easier to put on and keep your hands just as warm
- ▶ Hats
 - 70% of heat is lost through your head – so an insulated, wool, or wool blend hat will help keep you significantly warmer
 - A balaclava or other full face mask is another option
 - This is a knit cap that pulls down over your entire face with an opening for the mouth and eyes



- ▶ Cover-All's
 - Insulated cover-all's that fit on over everything else you have on keep you very warm
 - Seals out cold air from reaching possible gaps in your outer clothing
 - Types with full leg zippers are much easier to put on than those with only knee length or no leg zippers
- ▶ Vests
 - A good insulated vest around the torso helps keep your body core warm
 - It needs to fit snug but not restrict arm movement
 - Many stylish vests are filled with material that has little or no insulation – make sure if you are buying a vest for warmth you check what it is made of
- ▶ Outer Coat
 - Water repellant and well insulated are the best
 - Look for features like knitted cuffs in the sleeves, insulated flap covering the zipper, and detachable hood
 - If you are buying a coat for warmth – make sure you make sure it is made of good insulating materials
 - Many stylish coats do not offer proper insulation to keep you warm

Layering

- ▶ Wear clothing in layers to make it easy to add or remove them as needed
- ▶ In extreme cold, wrapping a sleeping bag or blanket around you is an effective way to help keep you warm
 - A body surrounded by a sleeping bag designed to sleep during 0° weather outdoors is certainly effective to help keep you warm
 - The sleeping bag can be wrapped around your entire chair and be easily removed
 - Another option is to unzip the bag and place the back of it in the chair before getting into it. Once you are in the chair, pull the bag over your body and zip it up.

Artificial Heat Sources

- ▶ Modern technology has brought many affordable “heat packs” onto the market and are effective when used properly
 - Place them on the back of the neck, under your arms, or holding them in your hands can provide soothing warmth making it possible to go out into the cold
 - Some products are designed to produce a lower level of heat and can be placed directly on skin
 - Be careful putting them directly on skin if there is a loss of sensation

**ALWAYS avoid prolonged contact to skin with any heat pack
as a burn may occur even with a low output heat pack**



HEAT PRECAUTIONS

After a spinal cord injuries, people are more susceptible to sunburn and overheating in hot weather. People overheat due to sweat glands and/or blood vessels not working the same way they used to. People are more likely to get sunburned after spending prolonged periods of time indoors during extended time in the hospital. Certain medications people can make your skin more sensitive. Talk with your doctor to find out what your risks are.

Preventing sunburn and overheating

- ▶ Use spray bottles to mist skin
- ▶ Plan for shade breaks
- ▶ Drink plenty of fluids
 - Water, Gatorade/Powerade
 - Caffeinated and alcoholic beverages dehydrates the body by causing the body to purge itself of fluid
- ▶ Wear protective clothing
 - Light weight, light colored, and loose fitting clothing is best
- ▶ Use sunscreen when appropriate

Protect yourself by knowing the signs of overheating

- ▶ Skin becoming splotchy, red, or flushed
- ▶ Dizziness
- ▶ Confusion or impaired thinking
- ▶ Feeling panicked or knowing something feels “off”

If symptoms develop

- ▶ Move out of the sun
- ▶ Go into an air conditioned space
- ▶ Drink liquids
- ▶ Mist your skin
- ▶ Fan yourself



THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR WHEELCHAIR

Width of your wheelchair:

- ▶ It's important to know the width of your chair so you can determine if doors, aisles, bathrooms, etc. are wide enough for you.
- ▶ If you're calling ahead to check the dimensions and the person is not sure, ask them to measure for you.
- ▶ When you're measuring – make sure you measure from the widest part of your chair.

Manual: _____ Power: _____

Length of your wheelchair:

- ▶ It's important to know the length of your chair so you can determine if you will have enough room to get into and turn around in tight spaces.
- ▶ When you're measuring – measure from the tips of your feet (while you are sitting in the chair) to the farthest point on the back of your wheel chair

Manual: _____ Power: _____

Knee Height:

- ▶ It's important to know the height of your knees while sitting in your chair. This will allow you to determine if the height of tables, sinks, counters, or water fountains will accommodate you.
- ▶ Measure from the floor to approximately one inch above your knee or thigh.
- ▶ If you have a power chair that reclines, make sure you measure while the chair is tilted all the way forward.

Manual: _____ Power: _____

Total Height:

- ▶ It's important to know your total height while sitting in your chair when using something like a van lift so you will not hit your head.
- ▶ When you're measuring – measure from the floor to the tallest part of YOU.

Manual: _____ Power: _____

Weight of You & Your Wheelchair

- ▶ It's important to know the combined weight of you and your chair for when you are using a lift or any equipment that has a weight limit.

Manual: _____ Power: _____



AQUATIC INFORMATION

Considerations BEFORE swimming

- ▶ Do you have any open or draining wounds?
 - If you have ANY open skin (scrape, pressure sore, burn, etc), you should not get in the water. There are no bandages that will 100% guarantee that it will keep your skin dry and protected when submerged in water.
 - If a skin site needs to be dressed or cleaned with something other than soap and water it is considered an open wound.
 - Colostomies, suprapubic catheters, and feeding tubes are OK to get in water as long as the surgery site has healed.
 - If you have an active infection, wait until it is completely cleared before getting in the water.
- ▶ Do you have any bladder issues?
 - If you are having bladder accidents try using a foley or condom catheter with a leg bag in the water – empty the bag before getting in.
 - If you have a bowel accident, wait 72 hours. If during that time your program returns to normal, you are OK to get in the water. If you have another bowel accident during the 72 hour waiting time, wait until you've been on a stable program for two weeks before getting in the water.
 - If you have not had results from your most recent bowel program do not get in the pool until you have results.

Protecting your skin

- ▶ ALWAYS wear water shoes or socks when in or around water
- ▶ Be cautious of skin irritants (rough or not surfaces) while transferring
 - To complete a pool deck transfer, put down a folded towel or foam mat to protect your skin from the rough deck
- ▶ Be aware of powerful jets and hot lights that are in the water as they can cause skin breakdown.

Water safety skills

The following skills are important to be able to do if you want to swim independently. You should **NEVER SWIM ALONE AND UNSUPERVISED.**

- ▶ Start on your stomach with your face in the water (dead-man's float) and roll onto your back
- ▶ Hold your breath for 20 seconds
- ▶ Float on your back or tread water for one minute