

Summer Treatment Program helps children with ADHD benefit from sports, research shows

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A summer program at FIU is proving that children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) can excel in team sports and benefit from the experience.

While it's a known fact that [sports](#) can help most children develop better social skills and contribute to their overall physical health, children with ADHD are often left out. Aggression and impulsivity are sometimes blamed.

FIU researchers in the Center for Children and Families (CCF) have found that its annual Summer Treatment Program, which combines structured classroom and sports activities, helps children with ADHD and other behavior disorders to excel in the classroom and on the field. Enrollment is currently under way for the 2014 program, which runs from June 16 – August 8, 2014. At least 200 children are expected to participate in the program.

A group of researchers from FIU, State University of New York at Buffalo and Grand Forks Human Nutrition Center conducted an eight-week study to evaluate the program's effectiveness in helping children with ADHD to learn the necessary skills to participate on a sports team. The findings were published in the *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*. The Summer Treatment Program combined behavior modification and sports training, primarily focused on soccer and tee

ball. All participants were children between the ages of 5 and 8 with a diagnosis of ADHD.

"The Summer Treatment Program is important not only for improving ADHD symptoms and the fundamentals of specific sports, like basketball and soccer, but also for fostering children's confidence, proficiency in their motor and social functioning and appropriate sportsmanship," said William E. Pelham, Jr., director of FIU's CCF and co-investigator on the study.

The researchers suggest that improvement in sports can help in the broader social and behavioral development of children with ADHD, because sports involve structured rules, cooperation, communication and prolonged attention to succeed.

Children who attended the Summer Treatment Program demonstrated significantly greater improvements, relative to those who did not attend the program, on several functional measures of sports outcomes including game knowledge, game performance and motor proficiency. Parents also reported significant improvement in their children's sports skills and good sportsmanship behavior.

To date 625 [children](#) have been treated at the Summer Treatment Program, which has been recognized by the American Psychological Association and Children and Adults with ADHD as a model program.

Provided by Florida International University

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