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## **Inclusive Strategies for Actively Engaging Youths with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) in Research**

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**Introduction:** Inclusive research methods, which actively involve community members in the research process, align with occupational therapy's goals of client-centredness, enabling participation through occupation, and learning through active engagement. Despite increasing use of these methods, few studies have described how individuals with IDD actively engaged throughout the research process.

**Objectives:** This presentation discusses the Voices of Youth inclusive research project and describes the research process and reflects upon strategies used to promote active engagement of youths with IDD.

**Method:** The research team included three youths with IDD who participated in a three year project which used video methods to explore perspectives of 24 youths with IDD (13-24 years) on friendship and community participation. The research team, including the youths, provided ongoing feedback about their experiences and contributions. Team feedback from each research phase was analyzed to elicit strategies for active engagement and to critically reflect on the benefits and challenges of the research process.

**Results:** Several strategies such as visual supports, small group work, accessible language, longer timelines, and opportunities for collaboration on presentations, and knowledge translation activities were implemented to promote active engagement. The youths reported engagement through 'feeling heard', learning new research and advocacy skills, and feeling proud of their contributions.

**Conclusion:** This project yielded critical insights and a guiding framework for inclusive research. This approach may create transformative opportunities for youths to actively engage in research-based occupations. To ensure engagement, inclusive research requires forethought, transparency, and a tailored approach that considers the needs and abilities of all.