Kishwaukee Special Recreation Association (KSRA)
A.R.I.S.E. Program Lead – Position Description
Updated 09-03-2026

Position Title
A.R.I.S.E. Program Lead

Status
Part-Time / Hourly / Non-Exempt

Pay Range
$18.00 – $22.00 per hour, depending on qualifications and experience.

Hours
18–20 hours per week, primarily Monday, Wednesday, and Friday during A.R.I.S.E. programming. Not to exceed 999 hours annually.

Reports To
Therapeutic Recreation Program Coordinator

Provides Program Leadership To
- Part-Time A.R.I.S.E. Staff
- Therapeutic Recreation Interns
- Volunteers & Field Work Students

Organization Overview
The Kishwaukee Special Recreation Association (KSRA) provides inclusive recreation programs and services for individuals with disabilities throughout DeKalb County and surrounding communities. KSRA collaborates with member park districts, schools, families, community organizations, and the Kishwaukee Special Recreation Foundation (KSRF) to create meaningful recreation, social, educational, and community inclusion opportunities for participants of all ages and abilities.

KSRA is committed to fostering independence, social connection, wellness, and accessibility through therapeutic recreation programming and inclusion services.

Position Summary
The A.R.I.S.E. Program Lead provides consistent day-to-day leadership for KSRA's Adult Day Program. The position supports high-quality therapeutic recreation programming, participant well-being, staff and intern coordination, and successful daily program operations. The Program Lead works closely with the Therapeutic Recreation Program Coordinator to promote participant independence, meaningful participation, social connection, safety, and overall well-being.

Essential Duties & Responsibilities

Program Leadership & Participant Support
- Oversee high-quality Therapeutic Recreation programming for adults ages 22 and older with disabilities, promoting independence, meaningful participation, social connection, and overall well-being.
- Assist with the planning, development, implementation, and evaluation of program activities based on participant goals, interests, abilities, needs, and levels of participation.
- Implement recreation interventions designed to support participants' physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and leisure-related goals.
- Develop and implement individualized behavior support strategies in collaboration with participants, families, staff, and the Therapeutic Recreation Program Coordinator.

- Adapt activities, environments, equipment, instructions, and communication methods to promote accessibility, inclusion, participant choice, and successful participation.
- Monitor participant progress and participation and modify recreation interventions and support strategies as individual needs, goals, and abilities change.
- Provide direct assistance with activities of daily living (ADLs), including toileting, personal care, eating, mobility, and other individualized support needs as appropriate.
- Advocate for the safety, dignity, independence, preferences, and overall well-being of participants.

Program Planning & Operations

- Coordinate daily program preparation, materials, supplies, equipment, and activity spaces.
- Assist with the pickup, transportation, preparation, organization, and inventory of supplies needed for programming.
- Safely operate a KSRA vehicle/van to transport participants to community outings, recreation opportunities, events, and other program activities.
- Arrive at least 30 minutes prior to the scheduled start of the program to prepare the environment, materials, and staff and remain on-site until all participants have been safely picked up.
- Complete required participant documentation, progress monitoring, incident documentation, program records, and other assigned documentation accurately and in a timely manner.
- Participate in agency planning, staff meetings, program development, evaluations, and strategic initiatives that support the continued growth and quality of KSRA services.

Staff Leadership & Support

- Provide day-to-day leadership to part-time program staff and interns, including assigning responsibilities, providing guidance, and modeling appropriate participant support.
- Promote consistent implementation of participant plans, accommodations, behavioral strategies, and program expectations.
- Communicate relevant participant information to program staff while maintaining appropriate confidentiality.
- Support Therapeutic Recreation interns and field work students in their professional learning and program responsibilities.

Safety & Risk Management

- Maintain a safe, organized, welcoming, and accessible program environment.
- Respond appropriately to participant needs, behavioral concerns, incidents, medical needs, and emergencies within the scope of training.
- Maintain a working knowledge of agency and program-specific safety rules, emergency procedures, and participant care protocols.
- Report unsafe conditions, work-related injuries, incidents, and accidents promptly and complete required documentation.
- Use appropriate equipment, staff assistance, gait belts, lifts, and personal protective equipment as required to reduce injury and exposure risks.

Qualifications

Education & Experience

- Current college student pursuing a degree in Therapeutic Recreation, Parks & Recreation, Human Services, Special Education, or a closely related field with a minimum of two (2) years of relevant experience working with individuals with disabilities; OR a bachelor’s degree in one of these or a closely related field.

- Experience in a recreation, therapeutic recreation, adult day, community-based, education, healthcare, or similar setting preferred.
- Demonstrated ability to facilitate and adapt recreation programs for individuals with varying abilities and support needs.
- Experience providing program leadership or supporting part-time staff, volunteers, or interns preferred.

Certifications

- CPR/First Aid/AED certification required or ability to obtain within agency-required timelines.
- Handle With Care or other agency-approved safe physical management training required or ability to obtain.
- Valid Illinois Driver's License required and ability to meet KSRA requirements for operating agency vehicles.

Knowledge, Skills & Abilities

- Knowledge of therapeutic recreation, adaptive recreation, inclusion practices, and participant support strategies.
- Ability to adapt activities and environments for individuals with varying physical, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral needs.
- Ability to assist with personal care and activities of daily living while maintaining participant dignity and privacy.
- Strong leadership, communication, interpersonal, organizational, and problem-solving skills.
- Ability to remain calm, professional, and solution-focused during stressful situations.
- Ability to work independently while collaborating effectively with participants, families, staff, interns, and community partners.

Core Competencies

- Reliability
- Empathy
- Leadership
- Adaptability
- Communication
- Initiative
- Problem Solving
- Professionalism
- Advocacy & Inclusion

Physical Requirements

The A.R.I.S.E. Program Lead must be able to assist participants with mobility, transfers, and personal care; lift and transport equipment, supplies, wheelchairs, and program materials; participate actively in recreation programs and community outings; and drive agency vehicles. The employee may be required to lift or move up to 75 pounds with assistance and respond appropriately during emergency, behavioral, or high-stress situations. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

Work Environment

Work is performed in recreation facilities, community locations, office settings, vehicles, and public environments. The employee may work indoors and outdoors in varying weather conditions and will regularly interact with participants, families, staff, interns, volunteers, and community partners.

Equal Opportunity Statement

KSRA is an Equal Opportunity Employer committed to creating an inclusive environment for all employees, participants, volunteers, and community members.