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Project Title: A Closer Step to Inclusion: An Examination of an Organization that Fosters Friendships between People with and without Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Abstract:

Research on effectiveness of organizations that work with people with intellectual disabilities vary. Some scholars argue that these organizations segregate, isolate, exclude, and further divide people with intellectual disabilities from the broader community.¹ Others assert that these organizations promote relationships between people with and without intellectual disabilities.² Historically, stigmatized labels such as mentally “retarded” or “handicapped” devalued those challenged individuals. “Intellectually disabled” was developed to end the negative connotation. Despite these label changes, there is still a lack of acceptance in mainstream society. This research focuses on one organization, Best Buddies International, which tries to foster greater interaction between people with and without intellectual disabilities. Their premise is that people will become more educated and understanding through the sharing of interests and friendships. This study focuses on the different practices Best Buddies International implements to end the stigma of intellectual disability and create social change through a sense of inclusion.

¹ Snow, 2007-09; Becker 1963 in Bogdan and Taylor 1989

² Hartnett et al., 2008