

Ten Strategies for Ensuring Commitment to Active Aging

The Building Healthy Community for Active Aging Steering Committee*

Active Aging takes place when older adults regularly participate in a variety of structured and unstructured physical activities. Communities can promote Active Aging by implementing a diverse array of accessible physical-activity programs, and helping to make more accessible self-directed physical-activity opportunities for those 50-plus. All of these opportunities should emphasize activities that increase endurance, strength, flexibility, and balance, while adhering to the principles of injury prevention. Self-directed activities include walking, biking, fitness trails and similar activities that are appropriate for participants at various levels of fitness and functional ability.

Strategy #1

Have a written community goal statement for increasing levels of physical activity among older adults.

Our community has defined goals or a mission for increasing older adult participation in active aging/physical activity.

Background

Scientific evidence indicates that regular physical activity can bring dramatic health benefits to people of all ages and abilities, and that these benefits extend over the entire life-course. Physical activity offers one of the greatest opportunities to extend years of active, independent life, reduce disability, and improve the quality of life of older adults.

Regular physical activity reduces the risk of dying prematurely and developing diabetes, high blood pressure, and colon cancer. It reduced feelings of depression and anxiety, helps control weight, helps maintain healthy bones and muscles, and promotes psychological well-being. Despite these health advantages, one-third of adults age 50+ live sedentary lives.

Physical activity should be an integral part of daily life. It is recommended that people of all ages participate in moderate physical activity, such as walking, for a minimum of 30 minutes a day, five times per week. To meet this recommendation, physical activity can be accumulated during the day, such as walking for 10 minutes three times daily.

Getting Started

An increasing number of communities are identifying goals for increasing physical activity levels among older adults in the community. Goals are written statements about what your group wants to accomplish. Your goals should be specific, measurable, attainable, and time specific. They can be long-term or short-term. Start by planning a

vision of where you want to be in terms of physical activity in your community, then adding strategies and action steps to achieve your plan.

According to the National Council on Aging, the most effective physical activity programs for older adults encompass ten principles. These principles can be used in setting goals for increasing physical activity, developing new programs, and evaluating the effectiveness of current programs.

The most effective and safe physical activity programs for older adults are those that:

- 1) Set a specific goal for increasing older adult participation in physical activity.
- 2) Encourage physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle.
- 3) Promote everyday tasks as opportunities for physical activity.
- 4) Offer a variety of group-based physical activity programs and self-directed opportunities that are suitable for older adults.
- 5) Offer physical activity programs that feature one or more components of physical activity (cardiovascular, strength, flexibility, balance).
- 6) Conduct a census of active aging programs in the community/city.
- 7) Ensure that programs are safe and effective, and are tailored to meet the needs of individual participants.
- 8) Offer instruction in proper technique and provide adequate supervision.
- 9) Include behavioral support strategies to increase motivation and promote retention.
- 10) Address risk management and injury prevention.

Internet Resources on Physical Activity and Aging

The National Blueprint: Increasing Physical Activity Among Adults Age 50 and Older
www.agingblueprint.org/PDFs/Final_Blueprint_Doc.pdf

Healthy People in Healthy Communities Planning Guide
(U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services)
<http://www.healthypeople.gov/Publications/HealthyCommunities2001/healthycom01hk.pdf>

NCOA's Center for Healthy Aging – Physical Activity Resources
www.healthyagingprograms.com/content.asp?sectionid=73

Active for Life
www.activeforlife.info
<http://learningnetworkforactiveaging.org/>

Internet Resources on Setting Goals

University of Kansas Community Toolbox
Analyzing Problems and Goals
http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/tk/en/tools_tk_3.jsp

New York State Department of Health
Setting Goals and Objectives

<http://www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/chac/goal2.htm>

Strategy #2

Establish a community coalition or community advisory group with representation from a variety of community, aging, and health sectors to promote active aging programs and opportunities for older adults.

Our community has established interagency committees, task forces, or other community partnerships with local aging organizations, service providers, and agencies as a means of coordinating activities and programs with smart growth and active aging/physical activity components.

Background

Organizations that tackle the problem of sedentary lifestyles must consider the many factors that influence older adults' lives. Therefore, organizations will need to engage multiple levels of community infrastructure and expand their level of social and environmental influence. An integrated and collaborative approach will involve individuals and organizations in health care, social services, transportation, parks and recreation, exercise and fitness, senior living facilities, community planning, and other diverse areas of professional expertise.

Some of the challenges of initiating and maintaining a community partnership, task force, or committee will be enlisting volunteers or professionals who will commit to the task long-term, keeping committee members informed and updated, keeping the group motivated, and helping team members work cooperatively for the sake of the common goals.

Getting Started

Start with a list of potential individuals and organizations that could join the committee. Consider taking advantage of local partnerships that have already been established. If the goal is to use as many community resources as possible, then group membership should be open to anyone who has an interest in the group's goals. Be sure to include community citizens on the roster. Decide if the group will charge a fee for membership to cover the coalition's costs, what role each member will play, and how tasks will be assigned or distributed.

Internet Resources on Building Community Partnerships

Active Living by Design

<http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/index.php?id=6>

Community Partnerships for Older Adults

<http://www.partnershipsforolderadults.org/>

Minnesota Department of Health Community Health Promotion Guide
Building a Team

http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/chp/hpkit/text/team_main.htm

New York State Department of Health
Engaging Partners

<http://www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/chac/partners2.htm>

University of Kansas Community Toolbox
Create Coalitions and Partnerships

<http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/coalitions/create/quicktips.jsp>

Examples of Effective Partnerships

Greater Lafayette Coalition for Living Well After 50
(Example of community coalition)

<http://www.livingwellafter50.org/>

Partnership for Prevention

From the Field: Four Communities Implement Active Aging Programs

http://www.prevent.org/images/stories/Files/publications/CCFAA_case_studies.pdf

Partnering to Promote Healthy Aging: Creative Best Practice Community Partnerships

<http://www.healthyagingprograms.org/content.asp?sectionid=31&ElementID=160>

Strategy #3

Conduct a community assessment of rates of older adult participation in community-based physical activity programs or opportunities.

Our community has conducted a community assessment or survey, or reviewed information/data for increasing older adult participation in active aging/physical activity.

Background

To reach your goals of increasing physical activity among older adults, it is necessary to know where you are starting from. A community assessment helps to identify the status of physical activity involvement among the older adult population and to lay the foundation for developing strategies for reaching your goals. This assessment will also be useful when evaluating the success of diverse efforts. There are various surveys and measures which can be utilized to document this information:

- Community health status indicators, such as morbidity and mortality data and other health status data, e.g., rates of obesity or falling
- The percentages of older adults who are sedentary and engaging in no leisure time activity as well as though engaging in some type of physical activity
- Program participation rates of community physical activity programs, worksite programs
- Inventory and participation rates of older adults in fitness centers and clubs
- Resource inventories: human, organizational, institutional, material
- Inventory of outdoor resources: parks, recreation centers, walking/biking trails, etc.
- Environmental surveys outlining pedestrian walkability

Getting Started

Ideally, your group will gather baseline information before taking any action steps. Make specific plans for who will gather what information from whom, and in what time-frame, before starting the analysis. Note that there may be existing county, state or national data that you may be able to access, from the Centers from Disease Control or your local health department.

Internet Resources on Community Assessments

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Healthy People in Healthy Communities: A Community Planning Guide Using Healthy People 2010

<http://www.healthypeople.gov/Publications/HealthyCommunities2001/healthycom01hk.pdf>

Minnesota Department of Health Community Health Promotion Guide
Community Assessment

<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/chp/hpkit/text/phase1.htm>

New York State Department of Health
Ten Steps in Community Health Assessment Development Process

<http://www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/chac/10steps.htm>

Texas Health Institute
Landscape Project

<http://www.healthpolicyinstitute.org/landscape/index.htm>

University of Kansas Community Toolbox
Community Assessment

http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/en/chapter_1003.htm

National Association of County & City Health Officials
MAPP Field Guide: A Strategic Approach to Community Health Improvement

<http://www.uic.edu/sph/prepare/courses/ph420/resources/mappguide.pdf>

Walkable America's Walkability Checklist

<http://www.walkableamerica.org/checklist-walkability.pdf#search=%22walkability%20assessment%22>

Strategy #4

Assess the availability and accessibility of physical activity programs and opportunities for older adults in your community.

Our community gathers evidence about and evaluates the effectiveness of and level of participation in our active aging/physical activity programs and opportunities for older adults.

Background

How many physical activity programs and opportunities are available to the 50+ population in your community? Does your community offer several programs located in one area and none in other areas? How can adults age 50+ access the programs? Is city transportation provided?

Many neighborhoods or communities are unsafe or poorly designed. Some neighborhoods have no sidewalks, and other areas are in the midst of busy thoroughfares, making it dangerous to cross the street to a nearby store. In addition, many older adults are isolated and lack transportation to community physical activity facilities and programs.

Getting Started

Create a listing of physical activity facilities, programs, and outdoor opportunities that promote an active lifestyle, such as walking paths and sidewalks. Determine which neighborhoods have plenty of opportunities, and which ones are in need of new programs. It may be helpful to start with the list of age-friendly fitness and wellness facilities located on the International Council on Active Aging (ICAA) web site. ICAA also offers a checklist for communities and individuals to use to compare and rate local facilities. The National Center on Physical Activity and Disability also has an online directory of local programs available for people with disabilities and health conditions. The National Council on Aging has developed a new web-based program to help providers and older adults identify age-appropriate physical activity programs. This has resulted in Active Options for Aging Americans, a guide to local physical activity programs and opportunities for older adults.

Internet Resources on Program Evaluation

American Society on Aging

Live Well, Live Long: Health Promotion and Disease Prevention for Older Adults
Sample Evaluation Questions, Indicators, and Data Sources for a Community-Based Physical Activity Program

http://www.asaging.org/CDC/module6/phase5/phase5_3.cfm

Active Living Coalition for Older Adults

Research Update, March 2003

Monitoring and Evaluating Physical Activity Programs for Older Adults

http://www.alcoa.ca/research_u_docs/2003_03mar_en_update.pdf#search=%22evaluating%20physical%20activity%20programs%22

International Council on Active Aging

Age-Friendly Facility Checklist

<http://www.icaa.cc/Membersection/Membersupport/2005checklist.pdf>

International Council on Active Aging

Age-Friendly Fitness and Wellness Facilities Locator

<http://www.icaa.cc/facilitylocator.htm>

National Center on Physical Activity and Disabilities

Listing of programs by location

<http://www.ncpad.org/programs/>

National Council on the Aging

Center for Healthy Aging

Physical Activity Programs Checklist

<http://www.healthyagingprograms.com/content.asp?sectionid=73&ElementID=334>

Active Options

<http://www.activeoptions.org/>

Strategy #5

Develop a community plan to address barriers to, and enhancements for, increasing older adults' participation in physical activity programs or opportunities.

Our community has a broad-based planning process that includes feasibility, cost, impact, time frame, and leadership for creating/promoting active aging/physical activity for aging adults.

Background

A strategic plan outlines the objectives, goals, and strategies that your community team will use to promote active aging/physical activity for older adults. A broad-based community health plan will describe in detail the feasibility of your plan, the cost to execute the plan, the impact that you envision your plan will have on the community, time-frame for completing your goals, and the people who will lead the various action items.

Getting Started

For each action item identified, include a description of the action step, or what will happen; the people involved; the time-line for completing this step; the required resources; the barriers or resistance to the plan; and potential collaborators. Carefully crafted action plans add credibility to your initiative, enforce accountability, and ensure that no important tasks are overlooked. Action plans save time, energy, and resources long-term and keep everyone on task.

The University of Kansas advises taking the following steps to plan your work:

- 1) Convene a planning group to design your action plan.
- 2) Develop a plan composed of action steps that address all proposed changes
- 3) Review your plan carefully to check for completeness; make sure each action plan will help achieve your goals.
- 4) Follow through with the action steps.
- 5) Keep everyone informed.
- 6) Keep track of what and how well you have done.

Internet Resources on Strategic Planning

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Healthy People 2010 Toolkit

<http://www.healthypeople.gov/state/toolkit/priorities.htm>

Illinois Association of Regional Councils

Developing a Community Strategic Plan: A Guide for Local Officials

<http://www.ncicg.org/CSPTOC.pdf#search=%22developing%20community%20strategic%20plans%22>

Minnesota Department of Health Community Health Promotion Guide
Developing a Plan of Action

http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/chp/hpkit/text/action_main.htm

Montana Disability and Health Program Strategic Plan 2006-2010 (executive summary)
(Example of a strategic health plan)

<http://mtdh.ruralinstitute.umt.edu/Publications/ExecSummary.htm>

University of Kansas Community Toolbox
Developing a Strategic Plan

http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/en/chapter_1007.htm

Strategy #6

Create a community resource listing of physical activity programs and opportunities appropriate for older adults.

Background

Residents may not realize all that their community has to offer in terms of physical activity options. From wellness facilities to park and recreation programs, and to walking groups, communities typically have numerous opportunities available. Community residents can benefit from having a published list of options that includes program locations, hours of operation, contact information, and a description of activities.

Getting Started

A list could be organized by location as well as type of program/facility. Include in the list all opportunities, including parks, trails, golf courses, tennis facilities, running tracks, and physical activity groups. The National Council on Aging has developed a new web-based program to help providers and older adults identify age-appropriate physical activity programs. This has resulted in Active Options for Aging Americans, a guide to local physical activity programs and opportunities for older adults.

Internet Resources on Creating a List of Physical Activity Opportunities

Healthy People in Healthy Communities Planning Guide
(U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services)

<http://www.healthypeople.gov/Publications/HealthyCommunities2001/healthycom01hk.pdf>

National Council on the Aging
Center for Healthy Aging
Physical Activity Programs Checklist

<http://www.healthyagingprograms.com/content.asp?sectionid=73&ElementID=334>

Active Options

<http://www.activeoptions.org/>

Active for Life
Template for a Community Resource Guide

<http://www.activeforlife.info/resources/files/Community%20Guide%20Template%20generic-detailed.pdf>

Learning Network for Active Aging
Screening Tool

<http://www.easyforyou.info/>

Community Connector (Sample Listing from Franklin County, Maine)
<http://www.thecommunityconnector.org/directory/168>

Strategy #7

Initiate a community campaign to educate older adults about the different ways they can achieve recommended levels of physical activity.

Our community has an initiative that includes promotion, advertising, recruitment, and widely available programs and opportunities to engage more older adults in active aging/physical activity.

Background

Recruiting participants for community physical activity programs can be challenging since many older adults are reluctant to join programs for numerous reasons. Recruitment typically requires using community partnerships and referral strategies to identify potential participants and effective promotion initiatives or campaigns to generate interest in the programs your community has to offer.

Getting Started

Many communities publish physical activity guides that list recreation areas, fitness and health centers, faith-based exercise programs, walking paths and clubs, and other locations where older adults can join in and get active. Other promotion ideas include special-purpose walking campaigns, new program announcements at the local YMCA or senior center, and special promotions and incentives for older adults at area fitness clubs.

Internet Resources on Promotion, Advertising, and Recruitment

AARP-Walking Programs

http://www.aarp.org/health/fitness/walking/what_is_step_up_to_better_health.html

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Physical Activity for Everyone

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/everyone.htm>

National Council on the Aging-Center for Healthy Aging

Physical Activity Resources

<http://www.healthyagingprograms.com/content.asp?sectionid=73>

Recruiting Older Adults into Your Physical Activity Programs

<http://www.healthyagingprograms.com/content.asp?sectionid=73&ElementID=384>

Active Options for Aging Americans

<http://www.activeoptions.org>

National Blueprint: Increasing Physical Activity Among Adults Age 50 and Older
http://www.agingblueprint.org/PDFs/Final_Blueprint_Doc.pdf

NIH Senior Health
Exercise for Older Adults
<http://nihseniorhealth.gov/exercise/toc.html>

Innovative Programs

National Blueprint
Blueprint Mini-Grant Programs
(For ideas on promotion and recruitment)
<http://www.agingblueprint.org/grant.cfm>

Best Practices in Physical Activity Programming
<http://www.healthyagingprograms.org/content.asp?sectionid=73&ElementID=144>

Strategy #8

Increase the variety of accessible and appropriate group-based physical activity programs as well as self-directed opportunities within the community for those 50+.

Background

A local coalition of various organizations, agencies, and businesses that has previously identified physical activity options in the community can brainstorm new ways to offer physical activity opportunities and programs. Communities can start walking groups, develop trails, create intergenerational projects, or a host of other options. Collaboration is key in identifying and initiating new programs for older adults.

Getting Started

Learn what are groups are doing in their communities. Discover how coalition members can work together to increase the number of physical activity options.

Internet Resources on Physical Activity Interventions in Communities

AARP Physical Activity Programs

<http://www.aarp.org/health/fitness/walking/a2005-01-19-walking.html>

Center for Home Care Policy and Research

http://www.vnsny.org/advantage/tools/Advantage_best.pdf

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Exemplary State Programs on Physical Activity and Healthy Nutrition

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/publications/exemplary/pdfs/Nutrition.pdf>

Partnering to Promote Healthy Aging: Creative Best Practice Community Partnerships

<http://www.healthyagingprograms.org/content.asp?sectionid=31&ElementID=160>

Partnership for Prevention

From the Field: Four Communities Implement Active Aging Programs

http://www.prevent.org/images/stories/Files/publications/CCFAA_case_studies.pdf

Strategy #9

Establish physical activity programs and opportunities in multiple locations and populations throughout the community with attention to ensuring cultural appropriateness and inclusion.

Background

It is important to try to disseminate programs widely throughout the community so that many different groups will benefit. The older adult population is more diverse today than ever before in terms of race, culture, education, functional levels, and socioeconomic status. Some cultural groups are more physically active than others. According to an article in the International Council on Active Aging Journal on Active Aging, European Americans exercise the most, and African Americans and Latinos exercise the least. People with low levels of education and income are the least physically active. Physical activity programs that are a one-size-fits-all model will be less successful than programs specifically targeted to subgroups of the population.

Getting Started

The American Society on Aging advises the following four steps:

- 1) Learn the history of the community
- 2) Engage with older adults in the community
- 3) Learn about key cultural factors and barriers
- 4) Look for strengths and resources in the community

Internet Resources on Addressing Cultural Sensitivity

American Society on Aging
Creating Culturally Sensitive and Effective Health Promotion Materials
<http://www.asaging.org/cdc/module1/phase4/index.cfm>

International Council on Active Aging
Journal on Active Aging Article: Cultural Approaches to Promoting Physical Activity for Older Adults
http://www.healthyagingprograms.org/resources/CulturalApproaches_PromotingPA.pdf

Dissemination of Physical Activity Interventions in Underserved Populations
<http://www.tonyancey.com/is19/102406d.pdf>

Strategy #10

Institute community-wide planning and policies to sustain community-based physical activity programming and opportunities for older adults over time.

Background

A coalition developed to promote active aging must continue its planning efforts to use local resources for this purpose and sustain physical activity programs that are available for older adults. Commitment of various individuals and groups must be ongoing to reach the goal of increasing physical activity among adults age 50+

Getting Started

The Healthy People 2010 Toolkit provides these steps:

- 1) Designate coalition partners to coordinate planned activities.
- 2) Create a work plan for monitoring progress in reaching goals.
- 3) Assign development tasks to individuals.
- 4) Establish and implement processes for input from key organizations, groups.
- 5) Develop a 5- to 10-year plan to implement, evaluate, and revise the plan.

Internet Resources on Policies

Building Sustainable Non-Profits

The Waterloo Region Experience

<http://www.crehs.on.ca/downloads/sustainability%20manual.pdf>

Healthy People 2010 Toolkit

Managing and Sustaining the Process

<http://www.healthypeople.gov/state/toolkit/11Managing2002.pdf>

Nutrition and Physical Activity: A Policy Resource Guide

http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/steps/publications/nutrition_activity_policy_guide_final.pdf

State Government of Victoria

Health Promotion Strategies for Community Health Services

http://www.health.vic.gov.au/healthpromotion/downloads/ebpf_nutrition.pdf

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Lessons Learned: Promoting Physical Activity at the Community Level

http://www.rwjf.org/files/publications/LessonsLearned_PhysicalActivity_GRR.pdf

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