

State-Based Disability & Health Program

N.D. Center for Persons with Disabilities at Minot State University

Healthy Lifestyles for People with Disabilities

Public Health Issue

Adults living with a disability in North Dakota are more likely to have chronic health problems like arthritis, high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease and diabetes than adults in the state without disabilities. They are also more likely to be overweight and obese, regular tobacco users, heavy drinkers and less physically active. Adolescents with disabilities are more likely than their peers without disabilities to consider or attempt suicide, smoke cigarettes and experience being over or under a healthy body weight.

Program Overview

Few resources in the state fully addressed the quality of health and life for people with disabilities until 2010, when the N.D. Disability Health project staff received certification from the Oregon Office on Disability and Health at Oregon Health & Science University to implement the *Healthy Lifestyles for People with Disabilities* curriculum. The curriculum approaches wellness holistically, focusing on emotional, social, spiritual and physical health. The goal is to give participants tools to evaluate their life circumstances, identify areas for improvement and make positive changes. The groups meet once a month for six months following the three-day workshop to report successes and receive support.

Making a Difference

Two workshops have been held in North Dakota. Six months after completing the program, participants reported positive changes in the following areas:

- Weight Loss/Healthy Food Choices:

Karl lost more than 20 pounds. His energy level is higher and he is exercising on a treadmill.

- Lifestyle Changes:

A woman who uses a wheelchair for mobility set a goal to walk three times each day, she accomplished that with the help of her support staff. Four months after the program ended, she actually walked into the room using a walker to attend the support group meeting.

Matt, a participant in the *Healthy Lifestyles* workshop, joined “Sporting Chance” and found a mentor to develop his bow-hunting skills. Without the *Healthy Living* workshop, Matt said he would not have achieved his goal of developing hunting skills and training his hunting dog.

Shaping Tomorrow

The N.D. Disability Health project is taking the success of the *Healthy Lifestyles* workshop to other communities in the state.

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¹ N.D. Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), 2001-2008.

¹ N.D. Youth Behavioral Risk System (YRBS), 2009).

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