

Challenge:

Disability communities have higher rates of chronic disease such as arthritis and diabetes. Evidence-based programs to prevent health problems from chronic disease are usually not inclusive or accessible for people with disabilities. Evidence-based programs have been shown to be effective through research. When the research process does not include people with disabilities, the disability community may be unintentionally excluded from participation. This is an example of systemic ableism.



For example:

- Evidence-based curriculum and materials might not be in plain language.
- Approved exercises may not be inclusive for people with mobility limitations.

Approach:

The Oregon Office on Disability and Health and Lane Independent Living Alliance (LILA) Center for Independent Living have brought together a community-based coalition in Lane County, Oregon. Coalition members include disability communities and groups that deliver evidence-based programs. Using NCHPAD’s Inclusive Community Implementation Process (NiCIP), the group chose to address systemic ableism in evidence-based programs.



Results:

The Lane County, Oregon NiCIP Coalition took action by:

- Inviting state-level systems partners to be part of the coalition that works on solutions.
- Choosing Walk With Ease as the program focus since Oregon Walk With Ease has been a national leader in inclusion and advocacy efforts.
- Advocating to the national Arthritis Foundation Walk With Ease Program about ableism in evidence-based programs and receiving positive responses.
- Presenting at state and national conferences about this problem and advocacy as a solution.

What partners are sharing as we work towards inclusive programs:

“We completely agree that Walk With Ease should be welcoming to people with all abilities, including those with mobility impairments. We believe Walk With Ease can be a valuable tool for many, even with adaptations including the use of wheelchairs.”

- Arthritis Foundation Walk With Ease Program

“I know we can have a productive conversation with [Walk With Ease] about the program and the issues that we have concerns about.”

- Lane Independent Living Alliance (LILA) Center for Independent Living

“We are committed to working together to make WWE as welcoming and accessible as possible for all Oregonians”

- Oregon State University Extension Walk With Ease Program

