

Creation of Walk With Ease Toolkit Supports Program Accessibility in Lane County, Oregon

Challenge

People with disabilities often face barriers to participation in chronic disease self-management and movement programs. In Lane County, Oregon, community members with disabilities said several barriers make participation difficult. These include lack of accessible transportation to program sites, difficulties navigating inaccessible paths and walkways, and movement activities without accommodations. They also said support from others with disabilities makes participation easier.



Approach

An Inclusive Health Coalition (IHC) formed in Eugene, Oregon that used the National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability's [NCHPAD] Inclusive Community Implementation Process, or NiCIP, to address barriers like these to participation in movement programs. Partners were from Oregon Office on Disability and Health, Community Integrated Network of Oregon on behalf of Comagine Health, Lane Council of Governments, Oregon State University Extension Services, and Lane Independent Living Alliance. The IHC chose to implement Walk With Ease because the Arthritis Foundation had recently published a Walk With Ease Disability Adaptation Guide, and Oregon has been a leader in inclusive implementation of this program. Based on community input, the committee piloted a number of adaptations, such as:



Hiring and training a facilitator with lived experience of disability to co-lead Walk With Ease



Holding workshops in central locations with fewer transportation stops required



Developing tools for leaders of Walk With Ease to integrate into programming to improve accessibility and inclusion



Delivering Walk With Ease in a hybrid format to reduce travel burden

Results

Evaluation of the pilot was positive, and highlighted that having a person with disabilities co-led the series increased accessibility and supported a greater range of participation. The Committee used pilot evaluation results to develop an Inclusive Walk With Ease Toolkit that builds upon the Arthritis Foundation Disability Adaptation Guide. The tools in the Toolkit support leaders to implement adaptations and accommodations to meet participant needs.

Highlights of the Inclusive Walk With Ease Toolkit

- Guidance for using co-leaders to support participants at various mobility levels
- Checklist to assess accessibility and walkability
- Adaptations of stretching and strengthening exercises
- Examples of inclusive program marketing
- Spanish language tools for leaders of Camine Con Gusto

One IHC member noted: **"Generating more resources for instructors is so wonderful, especially when so many of our instructors don't receive any training beyond the Walk With Ease training."**

The Inclusive Health Coalition made other important changes with state and national partners.

- ✓ Changes to online registration allow health program participants in Oregon to request accommodations.
- ✓ A revised Leader Agreement adopted by Oregon and the Arthritis Foundation clarifies that leaders can make accessibility adaptations without breaching program fidelity.