EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMS

Disability, Accessibility, and Inclusivity: A Best Practices Guide for Health Education Providers

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

This guide can help health educators provide inclusive programs and events for everyone, including people living with disabilities.

Topics in the guide include how to plan and host a successful, inclusive event, whether in-person or online.

An accessible environment lets people know they belong and there is a place for them. Being inclusive makes everyone able to learn and participate with their peers.

Making health promotion education accessible to people with disabilities—whether that's chronic disease self-management education (CDSME), falls prevention programs, or other outreach—takes planning, care, and attention.

The "**Disability and Inclusivity Best Practices Guide**" developed by Comagine Health, a 2021 ACL CDSME Grantee, and the Oregon Office on Disability and Health (OODH) not only helps educators deepen the understanding of disabilities, inclusivity, and accessibility. The guide also provides practical and effective strategies for creating an accessible and inclusive environment for all community members to participate in health promotion programs.

Developed for program coordinators and evidence-based program leaders within the Community Integrated Network of Oregon (CINO), the guide includes:

- Definitions of such terms as disabilty, access, and inclusion

- Tips for planning and hosting a successful accessible event

- Recommendations on what to do after an event

What is disability, and how common is it in the US?

Disability is the presence of a condition that makes it more difficult for someone to participate in actvities and the world around them. People with disabilities in the U.S. have higher rates of many chronic health conditions and are more likely to experience a fall.[1] In addition, chronic diseases and injuries from falls are the leading causes of death and disabilities in the U.S.[2]

Disability has three dimensions:

1. Impairment in a person's mental or physical structure or function

2. Activity limitations that impact life

3. Participation restrictions in daily tasks

In the United States, 61 million adults live with a disability. That's roughly 1 in 4 people.[3]

What is accessibilty and inclusivity?

The guide offers helpful definitions of the words "accessible" and "inclusive."

"Creating an environment that is accessible lets people know that they belong and there is a place for them," according to the guide. "Accesible environments allow everyone to participate."

And the guide points out 'environment' is not only a physical building but also things like walkways, signs and marketing materials, noise level, and visual stimulants.

Being inclusive, according to the guide, "means transforming communities based on social justice principles in which all community members:

- "Are recruited and welcomed as valued members of our community

- "Fully participate and learn with their peers

- "Experience reciprocal social relationships"

How can educators plan inclusive and accessible events?

When preparing for an inclusive and accessible event, "conducting an environmental assessment and identifying the gaps between the current and ideal environment is the most important first step," advised Ashley Peters, MPA, and Jana Peterson-Besse, PhD, MPH, the OODH presenters at NCOA's Grand Rounds.

To plan and host an accessible event or health promotion program, the guide shares thorough steps and recommendations. Some examples:

Event recruitment

- Partner and collaborate with people, organizations, and advocacy groups with diverse backgrounds within the disability community.

- Use plain language for marketing and information materials.

- Create solutions with participants individually to arrange equitable accommodations.

Site selection

Assess accessibility at the program site, including but not limited to:

- Parking: Make sure accessible parking spaces are clearly marked and have sufficient space, at least 8 feet wide with 8-foot-wide access aisle.

- Routes and entrances: Have a stable, smooth, slip-resistant curb cut or ramp (portable ramps are acceptable) that is at least 36 inches wide with a slope no greater than 5%.

- Restrooms: Accessible restrooms must meet required conditions. Place signs strategically with readable, plain language directions to the restrooms.

Registration

- Include options and contact information for requesting accommodations.

- Ensure all staff who are responsible for registration are familiar with accommodation protocols.

Transportation

- Before the registration process, identify accessible transportation options such as public transit, taxi, rideshare programs, and biking and walking routes.

Arranging accommodations

- Complete accommodation requests at least two weeks prior to the event.

Effective communication and language

- Be prepared to communicate in different ways.

- Speak directly to participants, not their interpreters, caregivers, or companions.

Involve support providers

- Work as a team with support providers for the participant.

Take care when hosting a virtual event

- Start an event with introduction, set ground rules, use icebreakers to practice technology, use both the audio and chat features, etc.

The guide covers best practices for different disability types including physical disabilities, sensory senitivities, and intellectual disabilities. It also has an event schedule and checklist, links to more resources on such topics as transportation accessibility and using accessible language, and questions to ask to help boost participation in health education activities.

For more details, view or download the interactive flipbook online.

For other resources about engaging people with disabilities in evidence-based programs, visit our key components page, "Resources for Engaging Adults with Disabilities in Evidence-Based Programs".

Sources

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Disability and Health Related Conditions. Found on the internet at https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/relatedconditions.html

2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Health Statistics.. FastStats: Leading Causes of Death. Found on the internet at https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/leading-causes-of-death.htm

3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Prevalence of Disabilities and Health Care Access by Disability Status and Type Among Adults—United States, 2016. Morbility and Mortality Weekly Report. Found on the internet at https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm6732a3.htm