

Facilitator Guide:

Project Age Well



Nutrition and Wellness Group Sessions

Created during a three-year innovation grant through the Administration for Community Living (ACL), this free facilitator guide equips organizations to deliver a series of interactive, online small group sessions that focus on building knowledge of and skills to support healthy aging. The content is rooted in evidence, built on the lived experience of prior Project Age Well participants, and powered by Project Open Hand.

ACL Disclaimer: This project was supported, in part by grant number 990INNU0023, from the Administration for Community Living, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201. Grantees undertaking projects with government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official ACL policy

Contents

Contents..... 1

Curriculum Overview..... 2

Guidance for Implementation..... 4

Sample Schedule..... 7

Curriculum Overview

Welcome to Project Age Well!

This program and its supportive learning and implementation materials are brought to you by Project Open Hand with funding support from the Administration for Community Living.

This curriculum supports one of the three components of Project Age Well. In addition to this Facilitator Guide, the curriculum includes individual lesson plans, PowerPoint presentations, and a participant workbook that help adults with at least 60 years of age gain knowledge and skills to address a variety of health and wellness needs during a series of interactive, small group discussions. Specifically, these materials help you:

- Share knowledge about certain foods, eating behaviors and activities that improve wellbeing.
- Encourage older adults to learn new skills and share existing ones with others.
- Guide discussion of community resources and shared experiences that can offer support for meeting health-related goals.
- Engage older adults in activities that promote changes in behavior to support wellness.

What is Project Age Well and why is it important?

The goal of Project Age Well is to provide peer connection, wellness education, individualized nutrition support, and nutritious food to socially isolated older adults in urban and rural areas. The program seeks to understand the utility of telehealth, peer groups, and individualized support alongside food service such as medically tailored meals and groceries in promoting nutrition security, reducing social isolation and building confidence in managing health.

Who should use these materials?

This guide and the supporting materials is designed for community health educators, including but not limited to nutritionists, case workers and community health workers (CHWs) within organizations that aim to improve the wellbeing of older adults through improved access to health education and opportunities for social connection. While Project Age Well was developed to include access to nutritious meals or groceries as a component, the use of this curriculum is not limited to food access organizations. While the program is designed to be conducted in an online setting via Zoom or similar platform, the materials can be adapted for use in-person.

What are the objectives of this curriculum?

The Project Age Well curriculum aims to facilitate improved nutrition security, social connection and health outcomes for older adults. Through participation in 16 weeks of Project Age Well sessions, participants will

- 1) Gain knowledge,
- 2) Build skill,
- 3) Identify community resources and support,
- 4) Engage in peer support, and
- 5) Engage in self-monitoring and tracking behaviors.

Each lesson plan indicates how the session addresses these objectives in the Class Outline section.

In general, the Project Age Well small group sessions provide a collaborative, educational space in which participants:

- Share knowledge about certain foods, eating behaviors and activities that improve wellbeing.
- Feel encouraged to learn new skills and share existing ones with others.
- Discuss community resources and shared experiences that can offer support for meeting health-related goals.
- Gain confidence in the ability to manage one's health.
- Engage in activities that promote changes in behavior to support wellness.

Your Role as a Facilitator

As a facilitator, you play a critical role in helping improve the quality of life of older adults in your community. Your mission is to empower participants with the skills and confidence to more effectively achieve their health-related goals, and to provide a safe, enjoyable and enriching space for older adults to support one another in maintaining wellness, as defined by participants themselves.

In your role, you will lead small group sessions using Zoom, display of PowerPoint slides, facilitate interactive discussions and activities, and reference supportive handouts and recipes. We hope this guide and the individual lesson plans help you support older adults in your community!

Guidance for Implementation

Session Structure

This series of small group sessions is designed to be conducted using Zoom or a similar platform. Participants are able to engage via

- 1) video call on a desktop, laptop or other device,
- 2) Dial-in using a cellphone or landline.

A participant workbook is also provided as an *optional* supplemental material to this course, but is not necessary to have a successful training.

The lesson plans that accompany this guide include learning objectives and a suggested outline of discussion and activities for each session. **Seventy-five minutes** are recommended for each session. This guide provides tips for adjusting content based on the time available.

Each session includes:

- Welcome and Connect – An icebreaker and/or mindfulness activity to bring the group together.
- Introduction to a nutrition and/or wellness topic – Background information, statistics, and group input on how this applies to their lives.
- Discussion of resources and strategies to support an area of wellness.
- Closing and at-home activity to encourage reflection and practicing skills or accessing relevant resources for wellness.

Curriculum Materials

- Facilitator guide
- Lesson plans (16) - Eight nutrition and eight wellness topics
- PowerPoint presentations (16) - Eight nutrition and eight wellness topics
- Participant workbook

Preparation for the Session

1. Identify and secure a quiet location with reliable internet connectivity for use during facilitation of small group sessions.

2. Review all materials listed above.
3. Download the PowerPoint to ensure accessibility.
4. Send class reminder emails and/or text messages to participants.
5. Test video, audio, and presentation display using the share screen function of Zoom or similar platform.
 - a. Ensure that "share audio" is selected with sharing your screen and a presentation includes a video clip.
6. Open the Participant Tracker to take attendance.
7. Optional: Identify a staff member or volunteer to take attendance and support participants who experience Zoom or connectivity issues at the beginning of the session.

Considerations of Context

The sessions are designed to encourage interactive discussion that addresses the needs and taps into the experience of each unique group. You can consider the following when implementing sessions in your community:

- 1) **Time** – Project Age Well classes were originally 60 minutes in length. Based on participant feedback regarding desire for time to connect and discuss topics, we suggest 75 minutes for each session. If you would like to shorten these sessions, review the lesson plans and PowerPoint in advance to identify which topics can be reduced in length.
- 2) **Language and literacy** – You may work with participants who have language barriers or limited literacy. Be sure to reference images on slides and in the Participant Workbook and use clear, simple language when describing concepts. Be sure to reference both the page and location on a page in the Workbook when introducing an activity. Try to speak at a slower pace and allow plenty of time for questions.
- 3) **Cultural Preferences and Experiences** - People's food and lifestyle preferences are formed by their own experiences and their culture. To enhance engagement and honor participants, allow time for participants to share ideas and information based on a lifetime of unique experiences. Help participants explore a range of meal preparations and activity types that align with their values and preferences. Allowing time for questions can help guide participants in finding healthful options that meet them where they are.
- 4) **Living Circumstances** - Project Age Well is designed for older adults, and some of the adults who participate may receive assistance from family members or others in

shopping, meal planning, and food preparation as well as other activities of daily living. Help participants look for ways to manage their food choices. For instance, if participants' meals are usually prepared by a family member or caregiver, encourage participants to share the session handouts with those who help them.

- 5) **Visual Aids** – Font size and type are designed to support ease of reading, but you may need to adjust these based on your participant population. Feel encouraged to print certain images and/or complement imagery with verbal descriptions to enhance accessibility. Be sure to reference images on slides and in the Participant Workbook and use clear, simple language when describing concepts. Be sure to reference both the page and location on a page in the Workbook when introducing an activity.
- 6) **Mobility limitations** – While a majority of Project Age Well sessions are accessible to those with limited mobility, several wellness sessions include optional stretching, balance and strength activities. These activities may be completed standing or modified for seated positions. All activities include the following notice:

You know what is best for your body so please do not feel obligated to participate. You can stay online with us and just watch or you can choose the exercises that make sense for you and your body. And signing off now is also an option if you are concerned about pain or injury. Sometimes a little encouragement can be a good thing, but we also don't want anyone to push themselves too much.

Sample Schedule

Small group sessions can be organized consecutively by module or alternated between the two modules. A sample 16-week schedule is outlined below.

Week	Module	Topic
1	Wellness	Developing Healthy Habits
2	Nutrition	Eating Well 101
3	Wellness	Building Social Connection
4	Nutrition	Variety of Fruit and Vegetables
5	Wellness	Reducing Stress and Cultivating Mindfulness
6	Nutrition	Portion Sizes and Meal Timing
7	Wellness	Protecting Your Brain Health
8	Nutrition	Food Quality and Food Labels
9	Wellness	Understanding the Power of Sleep
10	Nutrition	Meal Planning for Savings and Wellness
11	Wellness	Preventing Falls
12	Nutrition	Batch Cooking for Wellness
13	Wellness	Maintaining Mobility
14	Nutrition	Food and Mood
15	Wellness	Taking Charge of Your Health Care
16	Nutrition	Our Bodies and Nutrition as We Age