

Keys to Success: How to Enroll and Retain People With Disabilities for Your Type 2 Diabetes Prevention Lifestyle Change Program



Delivering the National DPP Lifestyle Change Program

Organizations across the United States are working to deliver CDC's [National Diabetes Prevention Program](#) (National DPP) lifestyle change program to help prevent or delay type 2 diabetes. Participants learn to make healthy food choices, be more physically active, and find ways to cope with problems and stress.

This tip sheet provides lessons learned and insights from an organization that focused on enrolling and retaining people with disabilities. A [disability](#) is any condition of the body or mind that makes it more difficult for the person with the conditions to do certain activities and interact with the world around them. The organization worked with a partner to adapt CDC's [PreventT2 curriculum](#) to be more inclusive. The partner also developed a checklist to assess locations for class sessions to ensure they are accessible to people with disabilities.

The organization's overarching lesson is the importance of [disability inclusion](#), which is defined as including people with disabilities in everyday activities and encouraging them to have roles similar to their peers who do not have a disability.

Keys to Success: What Other Organizations Have Learned

- ▶ Establish partnerships with organizations that involve or serve people with disabilities.
- ▶ Use evidence-based practices to choose or develop a program curriculum and materials that are more inclusive.
- ▶ Teach Lifestyle Coaches how to communicate with and make accommodations for people with disabilities.
- ▶ Train people with disabilities to be Lifestyle Coaches.

These tips are explained in more detail in the following section.
Review to see which ones will work for your program.



Establish partnerships with organizations that involve or serve people with disabilities.

- Partner with organizations that are already working with people with disabilities because they can reach this population more effectively. These organizations are trusted by this population, know its specific needs, and can help you make your program more inclusive.

“It is important to be intentional with outreach when offering any type of health promotion program to a specific group, community, culture, or population. It’s important to have the organizations and the people from that community spreading the word about the program.”

—Program staff

- Ask subject matter experts in organizations that work with people with disabilities to share inclusion best practices. They can work with your organization to create and adapt materials for this population or direct you to existing materials. Using inclusive materials may help you retain participants with disabilities in your lifestyle change program.

“Our partnership was instrumental. They have a training course that coaches can take to help them understand people with disabilities. They provided consultations on our marketing materials and shared materials for participants—specifically, resources on exercises that can be modified for people with disabilities.”

—Program staff

- Track your organization’s existing partners and continue to look for new local, regional, and national organizations to work with.

“We are conducting a partnership mapping exercise where we’ve developed interactive GIS-driven maps for all four of our states, drilling down to each individual county. Affiliate sites identified all state and local partners they are aware of or have connections to that support and address people with disabilities.”

—Program staff



Use evidence-based practices to choose or develop a program curriculum and materials that are more inclusive.

- Use the existing National DPP lifestyle change program curriculum and materials that have been adapted to be inclusive of people with disabilities when possible. Using existing materials will save the time and effort needed to develop or adapt your own materials.
- Ask people with disabilities to share their feedback on barriers and facilitators to access and include them in testing program curriculum and materials.
- Identify people with disabilities during program enrollment using surveys such as the [Washington Group Short Set on Functioning \(WG-SS\)](#) or the US Department of Health and Human Services’ [Implementation Guidance on Data Collection Standards for Race, Ethnicity, Sex, Primary Language, and Disability Status](#) (called the HHS questionnaire). This will help you understand any accommodations you may need to make.

“During our intake interviews with participants, we used the HHS questionnaire to understand the challenges they are facing and customize the program to their needs. We provide dietary support and the ability to speak with a dietitian for participants who need extra help. This is really beneficial for participants with severe physical limitations, as it helps them make more dietary modifications when they can’t do as much physical activity.”

—Program staff

- Modify or create your own program materials, if needed, using the [GRAIDs \(Guidelines, Recommendations, Adaptations Including Disability\) framework](#). The GRAIDs framework was developed to adapt evidence-based health promotion programs for people with disabilities. It encourages users to consider how a curriculum could be more inclusive in five areas: built environment, services, instruction, equipment and technology, and policy.

“Making the program accessible and inclusive of people with disabilities involved incorporating things that, yes, we already knew were best practice for including people with disabilities. But it was really using the GRAIDs framework that was developed in a very deliberate process and was very evidence-informed. So, we used national experts and what we know is the best process in the field.”

—Program staff

Teach Lifestyle Coaches how to communicate with and make accommodations for people with disabilities.

- Educate Lifestyle Coaches and other program staff on the proper terms to use when interacting with, addressing, or referring to people with disabilities. This will help them feel more comfortable as they work with participants with disabilities.

“Some of the other lessons we’ve learned are around just getting people comfortable. Getting people comfortable with terminology and language and how to refer to different disabilities and how to refer to inclusion.”

—Program staff

“Part of the training that we do involves effective communication and inclusive communication. So, how do you communicate with someone if you’re a Lifestyle Coach and you have a person who has a disability in your class? How do you communicate with them if they have hearing or vision loss?”

—Program staff

- Train Lifestyle Coaches on best practices for recruiting, enrolling, and retaining people with disabilities. Teach them how to use the adapted lifestyle change program curriculum and corresponding materials.

“It was a 3-day training that you had to attend. It was lecture, slides, some role playing. They specifically addressed the needs of people with disabilities, and they have a website that is a good resource for fitness activities for people who have a disability. They also made edits to the curriculum with suggestions that might help when you’re working with people with disabilities.”

—Program staff

- Teach Lifestyle Coaches how to accommodate people with disabilities. Everyone who participates in the lifestyle change program is an individual with specific needs. Programs should accommodate the needs of all participants, including those with disabilities.

Train people with disabilities to become Lifestyle Coaches.

- Actively include people with disabilities to serve as Lifestyle Coaches or recruit past program participants with disabilities to become Lifestyle Coaches. This approach promotes inclusiveness and helps participants with disabilities feel welcomed.

“I would suggest encouraging people with disabilities to become Lifestyle Coaches. I think ultimately that’s going to be important for selling the inclusion aspect of the program.”

—Program staff

“We went out of our way at the start of this program to recruit coaches who had disabilities themselves. This shared experience living with a disability is a unique strength of the peer-to-peer approach. As our participants graduate, they have the opportunity to become coaches. Many of these graduates have a disability themselves. So, our next generation of coaches includes people who have not only lived with prediabetes, but also have a disability and are program graduates.”

—Program staff



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Helpful Resources

- [CDC’s Including People with Disabilities in Public Health Programs and Activities](#)
- [National Association of City and County Health Officials \(NACCHO\) Strategies for Successfully Including People with Disabilities in Health Department Programs, Plans, and Services](#)
- [GRAIDs \(Guidelines, Recommendations, Adaptations Including Disability\) framework](#)