

# INCREASING PARTICIPANT RETENTION FOR YOUR TYPE 2 DIABETES PREVENTION LIFESTYLE CHANGE PROGRAM



## Keys to Success

The **Keys to Success** tip sheet series provides lessons learned and insights from others implementing the National Diabetes Prevention Program (National DPP) lifestyle change program on the topics of

- Enrolling and recruiting participants.
- Improving participant retention.
- Collecting and monitoring data.
- Achieving program goals and meeting Diabetes Prevention Recognition Program (DPRP) requirements for CDC full recognition.

**Retaining eligible participants with prediabetes is critical for your type 2 diabetes prevention lifestyle change program and to improve participant outcomes.** Programs with a proven record of successfully retaining eligible participants have shared the following tips and lessons learned from their experiences. Review each of the participant retention tips to identify those that are most applicable to your program and participants.

## ESTABLISH PARTICIPANT BUY-IN

- ▾ **Assess commitment and readiness to change prior to enrollment in the program.**
  - » Individuals who invest in the program personally may be more likely to be committed and follow through with the program.
  - » Offer an introductory Discovery Session (Formerly known as Session Zero) to share program expectations with potential participants and establish buy-in.
  - » Ask potential participants to sign commitment agreements before enrolling to help them acknowledge and commit to the program's expectations and requirements.

“Assess participant readiness to ensure that individuals are ready and committed to program participation and behavior change, including the implementation of a ‘Session Zero’ at the start of the program.”

### Encourage self-pay.

- » Encourage participants to pay for their own enrollment in the program to strengthen their buy-in.
- » Provide a sliding-fee scale, and offer limited scholarships to help encourage and facilitate self-pay.



**“To improve attendance and weight loss, implement structured payment plans to maximize participant buy-in and commitment.”**

## IMPLEMENT RETENTION STRATEGIES, ESPECIALLY DURING MONTHS 7-12

### Tie incentives to hold exciting events with guest speakers at sessions during months 7–12.

- » Hold interactive and exciting events like cooking demonstrations to boost attendance.
- » Host engaging guest speakers, especially past participants who can share insights and speak about their struggles, achievements, and “aha!” moments.
- » Provide free or reduced-price child care, or offer transportation options to improve participant attendance during months 7–12.
- » Offer non-monetary incentives, such as gym memberships, cookbooks, and athletic gear, to increase participant retention and duration in the program.
- » Structure incentives based on participants achieving attendance and weight loss goals.



**“To improve attendance, structure participation incentives to help motivate participants to continue attending throughout the second six months of the program.”**

### Increase the number of sessions offered.

- » Increase the frequency and number of sessions offered to help build trust and commitment among participants and increase attendance.
- » Offer biweekly sessions in months 6 and 7 to make the transition to monthly sessions easier.
- » Offer more than one session per month in months 7–12 to improve attendance.



**“Participants must be kept engaged throughout the duration of the program, and what happens between sessions is just as important as what happens during the sessions to ensure participant retention.”**

### Engage with participants outside of class.

- » Communicate with (e.g., call or text) participants between classes to check in and encourage healthy behaviors, provide support, and remind them of upcoming classes.
- » Set up a private social media group for the class to facilitate communication with and among participants, and to allow for activities such as sharing recipes and discussing personal strategies, experiences, and tips.





“Program champions are an important component of the program ... collect and share testimonials and success stories to encourage and motivate participants who are not doing as well.”

- ▾ Create connections within the group to provide additional support.
  - » Encourage connections among participants so they can support each other.
  - » Suggest supportive activities such as sharing healthy eating habits, recipes, and coping strategies, and walking or exercising together.
- ▾ Offer make-up classes via phone.
  - » Offer make-up sessions by phone to make it easier for participants who have missed a session to meet their session attendance requirements or to make up previously cancelled classes.



## ESTABLISH ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP BUY-IN AND SUPPORT

- ▾ Establish buy-in and support from the leadership of organizations from which you recruit.
  - » Build trust and maintain ongoing communication with the leaders (e.g., CEO, director, pastor) of referring organizations to support ongoing buy-in and program support.



## BUILD THE CAPACITY OF LIFESTYLE COACHES TO INCREASE RETENTION

- ▾ Build lifestyle coach capacity through training and assistance.
  - » Train lifestyle coaches on motivational interviewing, assist coaches to develop their skills, and convene groups of coaches to share their experiences.
  - » Use a program coordinator or more experienced lifestyle coach to mentor lifestyle coaches to build their capacity and skills.
- ▾ Emphasize the cultural competency of program staff.
  - » Train bilingual lifestyle coaches to serve vulnerable and underserved populations that are a part of your target participant group.
  - » Use a lifestyle coach who is culturally fluent with vulnerable populations to deliver program education and materials to improve reach and retention to those groups.

*CDC offers materials to assist programs in staffing their lifestyle change programs and training the lifestyle coaches.*



## DEVELOP LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL ADAPTATIONS TO THE COURSE CURRICULUM

- Supplement the curriculum by using culturally and linguistically relevant materials and handouts to appeal to the target population and increase retention.
  - » Supplement the English curriculum with Spanish language handouts, use the CDC-approved Spanish curriculum, or use other CDC-approved culturally adapted curricula or materials.
  - » Adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of participants by including cultural themes, images, or sayings; incorporate cultural dietary restrictions or preferences; or address traditionally male or female roles.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** *Lifestyle coaches may supplement the program curriculum with additional handouts and materials, but any changes to the curriculum content must be submitted to CDC for review and approval prior to their use.*

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**“Expanding our diverse team of lifestyle coaches and consistently building their capacity to recruit new participants, retain them, and support and motivate them to meet their program goals resulted in higher retention of program participants and better qualified coaches.”**

CDC offers [additional resources and ideas](#) for encouraging participant retention.



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