ON THE ROAD TO
WELLNESS
North Dakota Disability Health Project

Promoting the health and wellness of people with disabilities

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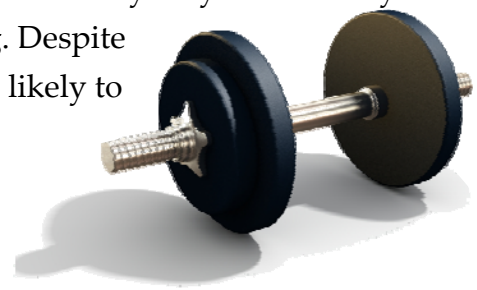
Including *Everyone* in Health and Wellness Activities

Everyone, including people with disabilities, should have the opportunity of participating in various health and wellness activities. Research has shown that engaging in an active and healthy lifestyle can reduce the risks of developing secondary conditions and life-threatening illnesses such as high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes. In addition, physical activity may ease anxiety and depression, improve mood, and foster a positive sense of well-being. Despite the health benefits, North Dakotans with disabilities are at least 10% less likely to participate in physical activities than people without disabilities.



Tips on Removing Barriers to Health Clubs, Fitness Facilities

Along with much of the population, people with disabilities look toward health clubs, gyms and fitness centers as a means to be more active and achieve a healthy lifestyle.

Now there's a guide that you can share with your health club or gym that provides information and strategies to assist fitness facilities to be welcoming and useable for anyone who would like to improve or maintain their health through exercise and physical activity.

Some of the things you will find in the guide include:

- ideas for reaching and welcoming individuals with disabilities and older adults
- guidelines for creating universally useable fitness facilities
- highlights on selected Americans with Disabilities Act features that are relevant to health and fitness centers
- ideas for adapting existing equipment for different ability levels
- pointers on how to purchase equipment to accommodate a wide range of users

For a copy of **Removing Barriers to Health Clubs and Fitness Facilities**, contact: NC Office on Disability and Health at 919-966-2932 or download this guide from the NCODH web site at www.fpg.unc.edu/~ncodh.

Source: *Orchid: health and wellness for women with disabilities, Physical Activity.* Chapel Hill, N.C.: North Carolina Office and Disability and Health, [2001]. http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~ncodh/orchid/pages/joinclub.cfm#anc-tips

Other ways you can support people with disabilities to be included in your fitness center or health club:

- Many people with disabilities have additional expenses for therapy, adaptive equipment, or health care costs due to secondary conditions related to their disability. Offering a reduced fee to qualified individuals may make membership affordable for those on a limited budget.
- Assess your facility to identify areas, people, equipment, or classes that are inaccessible. It is not enough that people can get into the building. AIMFREE (Accessibility Instruments Measuring Fitness and Recreation Environments), a tool to help you conduct an assessment of your facility, can be found at http://www.ncpad.org/yourwrites/fact_sheet.php?sheet=481 . Some barriers may be easily removed, others you can work on over time.
- Educate all employees on disability issues including people first language, how to include people of all ability levels in fitness classes, the impact disabilities can have on physical health, and how to provide specific support to people who experience various kinds of disability.
- Become an ACSM/NCPAD Certified Inclusive Fitness Trainer (CIFT). This certification helps fitness professional include and develop individual exercise programs for people with physical, sensory or cognitive disabilities. For more information contact the ACSM National Office by calling 317-637-9200 ext 115 or e-mailing certification@acsm.org.

The ND Disability Health Project can provide technical assistance to assist with health promotion, staff training and education, and disability awareness. Contact us at 800.233.1737 or visit our website at www.ndcpd.org/health .

Helpful Resource

The National Center on Physical Activity and Disability (NCPAD). This site provides information and resources that can enable people with disabilities to become as physically active as they choose to be, visit www.ncpad.org

To receive this newsletter by email or in an alternative format, contact project staff at 800-233-1737 or email kari.arrayan@minotstateu.edu

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Vision:

All people in ND have access to information and services they need to maintain good health and wellness. There are no health disparities between people with and without disabilities that are based solely on the presence of a disability.

Pay It Forward.....

Pass it on to others who may find this information helpful.

Health-related information provided in this fact sheet is for informational purposes only and should not replace advice from a medical professional. The ND Disability Health Project is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) through a grant (1 u59 DD000278-01) to the North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities at Minot State University. Opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the CDC.