

Introduction

Overview

The Community Healthy Activities Model Program for Seniors (CHAMPS) is an inclusive, choice-based physical activity promotion program to increase the lifetime physical activity levels of seniors. The program utilizes a public-health approach, targeting community-dwelling sedentary and underactive adults aged 65 and older with a broad range of health problems. The central premise of the program is that physical activity has benefits for everyone regardless of age and health status.

The program supports and encourages participants to develop a balanced exercise regimen (endurance, strength training, flexibility, balance, and coordination). This can include taking part in physical activity classes and programs in their community or exercising on their own. Participants are encouraged to develop a regimen that takes into account their health problems, activity preferences, abilities, interests, available resources, readiness to change and other factors. Using a client-centered approach, participants explore ways to motivate themselves, overcome barriers, and exercise safely. Emphasis is placed on personal choice and progressing at their own pace.

CHAMPS Research

CHAMPS II was designed by researchers at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) and Stanford University to increase the physical activity level of sedentary and underactive adults 65 and older. It grew out of an earlier program, CHAMPS I, which referred participants to existing classes and programs.

The CHAMPS II physical activity promotion program is based mainly on social cognitive theory, and utilizes principles of self-efficacy enhancement, readiness to change, and motivational strategies. Both CHAMPS programs were successful in increasing physical activity. All publications and information about CHAMPS research are available on the CHAMPS website.

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| Information on CHAMPS research can be found at www.ucsf.edu/champs/ |
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CHAMPS II Program Goals

Intermediate Goals

- To encourage and support the efforts of sedentary and underactive older adults who wish to obtain health benefits through increased physical activity
- To motivate participants who are reluctant or uncommitted to exercise to increase their activity level by helping them resolve ambivalence
- To encourage participants to develop a balanced physical activity regimen that focuses on endurance, strength training, flexibility, balance, and coordination

Long-Term Goal

- To significantly increase participants' overall physical activity levels through taking part in structured and unstructured physical activities of light to moderate intensity

CHAMPS Program Principles

Client-Centered, Individually Tailored Approach

Client-centered motivational strategies and cognitive behavioral techniques are used to help participants make their own decisions regarding how and when to become more active. CHAMPS II adopted the “spirit” of motivational interviewing¹ as a model of interaction between physical activity counselors and participants. Physical activity counselors were trained in techniques and strategies to promote productive interactions with program participants.

Unconditional Respect for Participants

Physical activity counselors do not judge participants’ level of progress, but empathize with participants’ concerns by showing interest and respecting their choices. They uncritically support participants’ efforts to be physically active and encourage them to develop their own strategies to overcome barriers.

Focus on Safety

Participants’ safety is a principal program concern. Physical activity counselors are trained to teach participants to exercise safely and to consult their physician about medical concerns related to their program.

Using This Manual

This manual is written for a wide audience of health professionals, fitness professionals, senior-serving agencies, parks and recreation departments, and academic research groups. Its central purpose is to describe the process of implementing CHAMPS program components to facilitate the development and testing of similar programs by others. We have drawn upon our experiences conducting the program to provide readers with practical recommendations for setting up a successful program in their local communities. The following are discussed in this manual:

1. Program Staffing and program participants
2. Outreach and recruitment
 - a. Awareness campaign
 - b. Preliminary screening by telephone
 - c. Informational meeting
3. Enrollment
 - a. Medical screening
 - b. Functional fitness assessment
4. Physical activity support mechanisms
 - a. Personal planning session
 - b. Telephone support
 - c. Group workshops
 - d. Newsletters
 - e. Activity logs

¹ Rollnick, S., & Miller, W. (1995). What is motivational interviewing? *Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy*, 23, 325-334.