

Staffing

A multidisciplinary team developed CHAMPS as a research study and a core group of the original study designers implemented the program and conducted the research. This team included psychologists, health educators, exercise physiologists, geriatricians, nurses, and statisticians. In order to conduct the program, the staff shared expertise in exercise safety for older adults with varying medical conditions, exercise instruction skills, principles and information related to exercise recommendations for this age group, and motivational counseling styles and strategies to encourage behavior change. CHAMPS had three masters' level staff members (an exercise physiologist for high-risk participants, a health educator, and a psychologist [who was also the project coordinator]) to oversee a total of 85 participants, develop the workshops and perform most of the tasks associated with a research project in the initial year. These staff members will be referred to as physical activity counselors (PA counselors) throughout this document. In addition there was a full-time research associate who helped with many aspects of the project.

Prior to conducting the program, the PA counselors attended multi-day trainings regarding exercise for older adults at the Cooper Institute in Dallas, Texas; attended multi-day trainings in motivational interviewing; and some attended courses in self-management for people with chronic conditions. Beyond their formal training, staff also kept current with professional literature related to older adults and exercise and attended professional conferences. As the program progressed, PA counselors conferred with one another to discuss challenging situations with participants.

What is important for others attempting to develop a similar program is that staff has the qualifications to plan and conduct the program. These qualifications may be found in an array of disciplines such as kinesiology, exercise physiology, physical therapy, sports psychology, physical education, gerontology, nursing, health education, psychology, and social work. Staff qualifications and skills vary across the program components and are briefly listed here.

1) Outreach and recruitment

- Presentation skills
- Trained in motivational skills and techniques
- Familiar with benefits of exercise for older adults
- Familiar with special exercise-related concerns of older adults
- Knowledgeable about the enrollment requirements and project details

2) Medical screening as offered in CHAMPS

- Involvement of physician to review screening procedures, review individual cases, and address questions of staff nurse/exercise physiologist throughout the project.
- Nurse (with experience working in cardiac rehab or similar) to initially review self-report medical history, check blood pressure and heart rate, determine if physician consent is needed prior to functional fitness testing or if any tests should be omitted or modified, assist with follow-up medical clearance and/or questions as needed.
- Exercise physiologist (with experience conducting fitness testing and prescribing exercise for older adults with various medical conditions) to assist the nurse with

monitoring of participants and to oversee the testing session. At the 6- and 12-month assessments, the staff exercise physiologist served the screening role that the nurse performed at baseline and additional exercise physiologists helped oversee the testing and monitoring of participants.

3) Functional Fitness Assessment

- Physician, nurse, and exercise physiologist(s) as noted above.
- Additional trained staff for check in/out and conducting assessments.
- Note that staff should maintain current CPR and 1st aid certifications to conduct the assessments.

4) Enrollment

- Knowledgeable about the enrollment requirements and project details
- Trained to administer questionnaires and other paperwork

5) Physical activity support mechanisms

- Counseling skills and exercise knowledge to work directly with participants during personal planning session, telephone support, and workshops (which often included small discussion groups)
 - Experienced exercise physiologist (or similar professional) to work with higher risk cases, to respond to individual questions in workshops, to serve as a resource for other staff, and to follow-up with physicians as needed
- Teaching skills and appropriate background to conduct workshops (which included a range of activities such as small group discussions, interactive presentations, and mini-exercise sessions focused on proper form and safe exercise techniques)
 - Guest instructors can also provide additional expertise