

Success Stories from the Montana Disability and Health Program

Living Well in the Community Improves Health and Saves Money

Public Health Issue

People with disabilities compose about 20% of the U.S. population but account for nearly half of all medical expenditures. A combination of medical, rehabilitation, and community advancements have increased the life expectancy of people with disabilities. A challenge for public health is to ensure these added years are quality life years. The *Living Well in the Community (LWC)* evidence-based CDC/ACL-sponsored health promotion program meets this challenge by reducing the effects of health problems and associated medical expenses for people with physical disabilities or mobility impairments.¹ (LWC's former name was *Living Well with a Disability*.)

Program Overview

A national study funded by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Disability and Health Program indicated that a state would save approximately \$81,000 to \$240,000 above the cost of the *Living Well* program when implemented with 240 participants each year. The Research and Training Center on Disability in Rural Communities (RTC:Rural), in partnership with MTDH, provides the organizational and facilitator training and technical assistance to Centers for Independent Living and other community agencies that implement workshops. Workshops promote skills to manage health, solve problems, communicate with service providers, avoid frustration and depression, increase physical activity and nutrition, and maintain healthy lifestyle practices.

Making a Difference

From February 1995 to April, 2021, RTC:Rural staff trained 1,166 Living Well facilitators in 46 states, who served more than 9,272 adults with disabilities. The vast majority of trained facilitators were located in 16 of the 18 states with *CDC Disability and Health programs (<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/index.html>). Since 2002, 742 Living Well facilitators in current and previous CDC Disability and Health funded states reached over 5,936 workshop participants, whose symptom-free days are estimated at having increased by 70,638 days. The estimated net benefit to healthcare payers is between \$5.55 and \$9.49 million. Between 2016-2021, Montana CILs migrated to the on-line, multi-media version of LWC. Twenty facilitators in 12 Montana communities supported workshops with 160 Montana adults with mobility limitations, intellectual and developmental disabilities, and/or mental health problems. Participants' symptom-free days are estimated at have increased by more than five years (1,904 days). The estimated net benefit to healthcare payers is between \$149,659 and \$255,782. By June 30, 2021, all CILs will have facilitators trained on the on-line WWD.

Shaping Tomorrow

Contact your state Department of Public Health and Human Services to discuss LWC as a possible Medicaid reimbursable service through the Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Waiver programs.

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"Living Well has been a great experience. The 10-week program allows individuals with disabilities to create a healthy lifestyle plan, unique to their desires and strengths, to overcome every day and ongoing challenges, and to reach meaningful life goals. It is awesome!"

~Darren Larson, LWD Facilitator



Darren Larson (right) and Michael O'Neil 1