

# Success Stories from the Montana Disability and Health Program

## Living Well with a Disability 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 with a Disability (LWD)* evidence-based CDC-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.<sup>1</sup>

### 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 *LWD* 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 *LWD* workshops. *LWD* teaches skills to manage health, solve problems, communicate with service providers, avoid frustration and depression, increase physical activity and nutrition, and maintain healthy lifestyle practices.

*"Living Well with a Disability 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*

### Making a Difference

From February 1995 to April, 2016, RTC:Rural staff trained 1,159 *LWD* 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, 735 *LWD* facilitators in current and previous CDC Disability and Health funded states reached over 5,880 workshop participants, whose symptom-free days are estimated at having increased by 69,972 days. The estimated net benefit to healthcare payers is between \$5.5 and \$9.4 million.

### Shaping Tomorrow

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

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