

Success Stories from the Montana Disability and Health Program

Improving the Nutritional Health of Individuals with I/DD with Menu-AIDDS

Public Health Issue

Adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities (I/DD) are at increased risk for nutrition related chronic diseases and secondary conditions such as overweight, obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, gastrointestinal dysfunction and nutritional deficiencies. Staffing issues and planning for multiple individual cultural and special dietary needs present challenges to maintaining food systems within to this population's living situations that align with the American Dietary Guidelines.

Program Overview

MENU-AIDDS was developed using community-based participatory research methods to ensure its acceptability and usability by group homes and individuals with disabilities. The program uses an ecological approach to health promotion, which means that it takes into consideration the many influences on nutritional choices and behavior. MENU-AIDDS' dietary recommendations follow the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the MyPlate food guidance system. It is not a therapeutic diet and does not need a doctor's order to implement. MENU-AIDDS has been evaluated in an 8- and 16-week pilot trial and a 6-month public health dissemination (effectiveness trial) in Montana.

Making a Difference

To date, more than 160 community-based group homes for adults with IDD in Montana, New York, North Carolina, and Oregon have been trained to implement MENU-AIDDS. Training evaluations indicate that 99% of managers trained agreed that they were well prepared and confident to implement the program; 96% agreed the day of training was worth their time and effort, and 96% agreed that they were prepared to teach the concepts and procedures to their staff.

Because managers, staff, and residents now make the weekly home menus, the food systems have become more responsive to cultural food habits and resident preferences, grocery store sales and seasonal foods, residents' special dietary needs, and their staff capacity. Significant improvements were found in homes that used MENU-AIDDS: healthfulness of planned menus dietary intake of individuals who lived there body weight of people who were overweight or obese and of people who were underweight gastrointestinal function

Shaping Tomorrow

MTDH plans to partner with I/DD services providers, who are already using MENU-AIDDS successfully, to use the program as a base for introducing the Diabetes Prevention Program to adults with IDD. Such a linkage would likely allow evidence-based diabetes prevention programming to this population who are at increased risk for the chronic, expensive condition.

For more nutrition materials and information, visit the MTDH website at <http://mtdh.ruralinstitute.umt.edu/Contact>

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At Eastern Montana Industries, group home manager Steve Amick used the MENU-AIDDS program to improve dietary offerings, but he did not stop there. He increased resident involvement in the menu planning by researching traditional native vegetables with several American Indian residents. They put several varieties of squash on the menu and learned new recipes together. This is a culturally competent increase in vegetable consumption—a winning solution.

