

Healthy choices program (Nutrition education, cooking instruction and yoga practice) for adults with disabilities sharing healthy people 2020's goals

Maria Cecilia Pfund
Seguin Services, USA

Healthy People 2020's section on Disability and Health focuses on promoting the health and well-being of people with disabilities. The U.S. Census 2000 counted 49.7 million people with some type of long-lasting condition or disability.

Compared with people without disabilities, people with disabilities are more likely to:

- Not engage in fitness activities
- Be overweight or obese
- Have high blood pressure

Surveys have found that a substantially lower percentage of persons with disabilities than those without disabilities report their health to be excellent or very good (28.4% versus 61.4%). Studies also have shown that individuals with disabilities can run a higher-than-average risk for such preventable chronic problems as osteoporosis, obesity, diabetes and heart disease. Similarly, research has shown that by engaging in healthful behaviors such as exercise, persons with disabilities can lower the risk of these common chronic problems. Further, they can prevent additional disability-related losses (for example, muscle tone, bone density and dexterity) and increase overall mental and physical wellbeing.

In Healthy Choices Program (12 weeks) participants are educated on nutrition principals including fiber, fat, breakfast, etc. Based on pre and post evaluations used that measured participant's health behaviors and perceptions as well as anthropometrics participants developed healthier lifestyles and lost weight.

Participants also gained valuable skills cooking healthful meals that helped them be more independent and conscious of food.

Yoga, facilitated them to have better posture, engage in physical activity and use their breath to calm and energize themselves.

Biography

Maria Cecilia Pfund has completed her BS in Nutrition/Dietetics in 2009 from University of Florida and has her certificate on yoga from Yoga University. She is the coordinator of Healthy Choices Program at Seguin Services, a not-for-profit agency that provides services to adults with developmental disabilities and other special needs. She also is the nutritionist blogger on wellness and nutrition for PersonalTrainerNetwork.com.