

2016 OAAA Small Grants Case Study:

Arthritis Services of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County

Expanding Reach of Fit & Strong to Adults with Arthritis



What is ...

Arthritis Services of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County?

Arthritis Services was founded in 1977 by an arthritis sufferer and has grown into a major provider of evidence-based self-help services. They supply nearly 500 classes each year in 24 different neighborhoods in the Charlotte, NC, area.

Arthritis Services of Charlotte-Mecklenburg County has administered the **Community Arthritis/Chronic Disease Project** since 2006, a program aimed to provide evidence-based self help services to adults suffering from arthritis and other chronic conditions. This program aims to transport evidence-based programs directly to participants, supplying 500 classes annually in 24 different neighborhoods in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg county area. The goal of the current project was to add **72 classes of the evidence-based Fit & Strong! Program** to current programming.

Why Fit & Strong!? Arthritis Services' previous experience with the program

At the start of the grant period, Arthritis Services was no stranger to the Fit & Strong! program. In 2015, they were a participant in a nationwide effort led by the University of Illinois and Westat to evaluate Fit & Strong!'s potential as a Medicare-reimbursable program. Arthritis Services delivered the program to 228 participants in 7 locations. As a result, they already had 4 experienced instructors and all the necessary equipment.

Project Goal: Deliver 3 complete cycles of Fit & Strong! in three new neighborhoods in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area, reaching 100 new participants.

Key Project Activities

Reach 3 new neighborhoods and 100 participants

- 3 classes delivered at 3 new partner sites: 2 Catholic parishes in Charlotte and a Department of Social Services Senior Nutrition program site in Mint Hill, NC
- Reached 66 people total, less than the goal of 100

Ensure that the program is effective at improving arthritis symptoms, function, and physical fitness

- 62 pre-test surveys and 38 post-test surveys collected. The majority of participants improved pain, physical fitness, and Activities of Daily Living post-program.

Implement Fit & Strong with fidelity

- Prior experience with Fit & Strong! and having trained instructors and all necessary equipment helped Arthritis Services deliver with fidelity to the evidence-base

Maintain changes and continue the Community Arthritis/Chronic Disease Project

- Beyond the OAAA grant, Arthritis Services expanded their capacity and commitment to providing direct services for people with arthritis by merging with the Centralina Area Agency on Aging in 2016

Lessons Learned from Arthritis Services

Build on existing expertise and evidence-based programs

Much research has proven Fit and Strong!'s efficacy for people with arthritis. Arthritis Services also had experience with this program and the resources (instructors, equipment) to deliver the program with fidelity.

Use partner organizations to expand reach

Arthritis Services wanted to implement Fit & Strong in three neighborhoods that they had never delivered programs in before. They used two partners to find program delivery sites:

Catholic Social Services: 2 Catholic parishes were eventually selected as program delivery sites

Department of Social Services Senior Nutrition Site: a longtime partner of the Community Arthritis/Chronic Disease project, provided one additional program site.

Align projects with the organization's mission and existing activities

Delivering Fit & Strong! fit well into the existing Community Arthritis/Chronic disease project and aligned with Arthritis Services' mission as a provider of self-management services for people with arthritis.



2016 OAAA Small Grants Case Study:

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of St. Cloud

Tai Ji Quan: Moving for Better Balance for Seniors with OA

What is ...

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of St. Cloud?

Catholic Charities is the largest nonprofit social services agency in Central Minnesota. Their **Senior Services and Health Promotion program** is an experienced provider of evidence-based health improvement modules and resources for people aged 60 years and older

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of St. Cloud is an established provider of senior services and evidence-based classes in healthy eating, chronic disease management, and falls prevention. In 2016, Catholic Charities received a \$5000 mini-grant from the Osteoarthritis Action Alliance to expand delivery of “Tai Ji Quan: Moving for Better Balance”, an evidence-based falls prevention program for older adults.

The Catholic Charities Health Promotions Model—The Importance of Partner Organizations

Catholic Charities employs a partnership model to bring health promotions activities to Seniors. To expand Tai Ji Quan, they aimed to partner with the **Catholic Charities Senior Dining program**, where seniors coming in for meals at Senior Dining Sites complete health and nutrition assessments to connect them with resources, services and interventions. They also developed a partnership with the healthcare organization **Rejuv Medical**. Catholic Charities trained a Rejuv fitness instructor to offer the program at their facility and to their patients.

Project Goal: Expand delivery of the Tai Ji Quan: Moving for Better Balance program and sustain the program through partnerships with healthcare and business organizations.

Key Project Activities

Cultivate referral networks (clinics, fitness advocates, churches) to recruit seniors with arthritis

- Rejuv Medical Clinic hired a Medical Practice Administrator during the project to facilitate referrals. This position improves the referral process from Rejuv’s medical clinic to the gym side of the business

Develop marketing materials and screening tool to screen and recruit potential participants

- OA screening tool used arthritis-appropriate measures (e.g WOMAC score) to assess potential participants
- Marketing materials like postcards provided a quick resource to referral partners

Use grant funding to train partners that can sustainably offer the program long-term

- Catholic Charities funded a staff member at partner Rejuv Medical to receive training for Tai Ji Quan. They also mentored Rejuv on delivering the program and reporting to the local Area Agency on Aging.

Lessons Learned from Catholic Charities

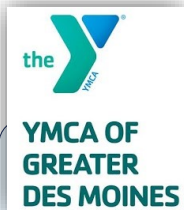
Ensuring that multiple leaders within delivery partners are invested in the program promotes sustainability

- The point person at delivery partner Rejuv Medical changed during the project period, presenting an unexpected challenge to continuity and indicating the need to ensure investment in delivery partners beyond one individual. Rejuv Medical was able to make this switch without compromising the program.

Consider the program’s fit within delivery partners’ existing infrastructure and constraints

- Catholic Charities trained an existing Medical Fitness Specialist at Rejuv Medical to deliver Tai Ji Quan, a move designed to promote sustainability beyond the grant period. However, at the conclusion of the grant period, Rejuv was unsure whether their schedule for other classes would continue to allow that staff member to devote the necessary time to Tai Ji Quan.

2016 OAAA Small Grants Case Study:

**YMCA of Greater Des Moines****Expanding Access to Tai Chi for Arthritis and Enhance Fitness**

What is the...

YMCA Healthy Living Center?

The YMCA Healthy Living Center is a medically integrated health and fitness center. In partnership with healthcare providers, the Center reaches high-risk patient populations through self-management and behavior modification training. At the start of the grant period, the Center partnered with more than 900 physicians, who provided referrals to its medically-integrated programs. In 2017, the YMCA withdrew from the Healthy Living Center, which is now managed by Mercy Medical Center.

Through its Healthy Living Center, the YMCA of Greater Des Moines began an approach to integrate medical care with healthy living programs. A \$5000 grant from the OA Action Alliance, with funds from the Iowa Falls Coalition and the Iowa Department of Aging, allowed them to expand access to the evidence-based *Tai Chi for Arthritis* and *Enhance Fitness* programs. These programs can reduce falls, improve pain, function, and confidence, and reduce medical costs among adults with arthritis and disability.

Providing Evidence-Based Programs: Reporting Outcomes and Promoting Fidelity

Beyond offering programs, other major goals of this project were fidelity to program evidence-base and outcomes reporting. YMCA of Greater Des Moines developed a fidelity checklist and had the YMCA Senior Trainer audit certain classes to promote fidelity. For outcomes reporting, all instructors were trained on the Timed Up and Go, SL Balance, and Sit to Stand assessments. Outcomes data was then reported to the Iowa Department of Aging so that they could evaluate the effectiveness of various falls prevention programs.

Project Goal: Increase access to Enhance Fitness and Tai Chi for Arthritis by increasing the number of classes and leaders and promote fidelity and outcomes reporting in these classes.

Key Project Activities**Reach at least 10 adults with arthritis/disability per class**

- marketing materials developed for Healthy Living Center members and for public, provided membership assistance using grant funds to increase access
- Ultimately reached average of 7 participants per class

Develop training standards & deliver programs with fidelity

- created a fidelity checklist for Tai Chi for Arthritis
- YMCA senior trainer audited classes to monitor fidelity

Expand number of YMCA sites offering programs

- From two sites at the beginning of the grant, the Y expanded offerings of Tai Chi to eight Y Sites and the Mercy Health and Fitness Center
- All sites offered the program for 39 continuous weeks, two times per week.
- the Y aimed to offer Enhance Fitness at three sites. This was temporarily stalled by the certified instructor's leaving the Y; however, they are training a new instructor.

Conduct falls risk assessments with participants and report results to the Iowa Department on Aging

- all YMCA instructors received training on balance assessments and collected data during classes.

Lessons Learned**Improve accessibility to programs by addressing barriers to participation by at-risk groups**

- While the YMCA was already offering Tai Chi for Arthritis and Enhance Fitness, a goal of this project was to expand the program to locations that serve a large number of low-income and ethnically diverse individuals. At the end of the grant period, three of the eight sites offering Tai Chi for Arthritis were located in diverse, lower-income neighborhoods, improving access to the program among these traditionally underserved groups.
- Grant funding allowed the YMCA to provide scholarship funding for participants to access programs that may have otherwise been financially inaccessible.

Healthcare provider referrals and marketing can help reach target participant groups

- The YMCA Healthy Living Center's unique medically integrated model relied on physician referrals to encourage adults with chronic conditions/disabilities to join the program. The YMCA also used grant funding to invest in marketing materials (brochures, displays) to enhance program reach to target participants.

2016 OAAA Small Grants Case Study:

University of South Alabama (USA)

Falls Prevention for Older Adults with Osteoarthritis: An Academic-Community Partnership



Using an **Academic-Community Partnership**— What does this look like?

This project's use of a partnership allowed it to capitalize on the strengths of three organizations: The *University of South Alabama*, which provided physical therapy students to teach classes, the *South Alabama Regional Planning Commission/ Area Agency on Aging*, which had experience delivering the Matter of Balance Falls Prevention Program, and *Cathedral Place Apartments*, which provided access to older adults with arthritis living in low-income senior housing.

Expanding on a previous pilot study of the *Matter of Balance (MOB)* falls prevention program, the University of South Alabama (USA) received a \$5000 grant from the OA Action Alliance to expand delivery of this program. Their project utilized health professions students to conduct falls risk assessment/education events and deliver the MOB program within two low-income senior housing communities.

Matter of Balance: Promoting Program Fidelity while using Student Program Leaders

MOB is an 8-week evidence-based program that emphasizes practical coping strategies to help manage older adults' fear of falling. Because this program is evidence-based, fidelity during program delivery is important. To maintain fidelity during this project, students leading the MOB program were trained by a faculty "Master Trainer", who also observed at least one session of every program.

Project Goal: Increase physical activity and falls efficacy among older adults in low-income senior housing via falls screening, osteoarthritis education, and the *Matter of Balance* program.

Key Project Activities

Reach senior housing residents with screening events/MOB

- 67 residents attended 5 falls risk screening/ health fairs
- these events were effective at recruiting seniors to MOB. 18 residents of one apartment building registered for MOB after an educational session.

Improve exercise and falls management skills with MOB

- Falls management scores increased significantly at post-program evaluation for MOB participants
- 48% of participants reported increasing physical activity

Sustainably train leaders via a "Master Trainer" who trains Physical/Occupational Therapy students and faculty

- One USA faculty member attended national MOB training and became "Master Trainer"
- 17 PT/OT students and 3 faculty trained as MOB coaches

Implement coach-led MOB programs

- 25 older adults participated in one of two MOB programs held at two low income senior housing sites

Sustain exercise after MOB with peer-led exercise classes

- At the end of MOB, a group exercise class with a peer leader was organized at both housing locations

Lessons Learned

Planned events can be an effective reach strategy to recruit participants into evidence-based programs.

- USA's plan to disseminate *Matter of Balance* also included delivering osteoarthritis education and falls risk screening events at senior housing sites. These events helped reach potential participants and recruit them to MOB. At one event, 18 residents of one apartment building registered for MOB after an educational session.

Using community settings for evidence-based programs can reduce barriers to participation among older adults.

- One of USA's partners, the South Alabama Regional Planning Commission/ Area Agency on Aging, had experience offering MOB to older adults; however, they reported transportation as a major barrier to participants. This project partnered with a senior housing community to bring the program directly to participants' residences.

"Master Trainer" model as a sustainability plan

- This project's PI used grant funds to train as a MOB "Master Trainer". To sustain the MOB program, she planned to continue to train additional students and faculty as coaches after the conclusion of grant funding.