Background

Through a cooperative agreement with the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) strives to improve the capacity of local health departments (LHDs) to incorporate people with disabilities into LHDs’ health promotion services and products.

NACCHO’s Health and Disability Technical Assistance (TA) project included five demonstration sites (funded from 2005–2007), five LHDs that received TA from the demonstration sites (funded from 2007–2008), and seven LHDs that received TA from the previous demonstration and TA sites (funded from 2009–2010). NACCHO’s Health and Disability Workgroup provided guidance to the project.

The project goals included the following:

- Providing LHDs with practical strategies and recommendations for successful integration, including tools and materials developed by peers from LHDs, community partners, and the Health and Disability Workgroup; and

- Providing relevant information from partners to promote the integration of health promotion of people with disabilities into local public health programs.

Based on a strong commitment to engaging people with disabilities and with the strategies for successful integration enumerated below, LHDs can implement and execute successful public health programs.

Tip #1: Increase Accessibility

Involving people with disabilities in all phases of local public health programs for people with disabilities, including planning and execution of the programs, is crucial. LHDs should consider involving people with disabilities as volunteers and recruiting people with disabilities as staff members. LHDs will need to make all LHD facilities, project activities, and meetings accessible for people with disabilities so they can be successfully involved and integrated into program planning and execution. LHDs can increase their accessibility by using the following strategies.

STRATEGY 1: PLAN

Include accommodation costs into the project budget by, for example, obtaining cost estimates of sign language interpreters and real-time captioning services for deaf or hard of hearing participants or for the publication of large-print documents. Hold the event on a public transit route or take the program to the community (e.g., in a school or group home). Give community members ample time to get ready and get to the event by beginning the event later in the day.
STRATEGY 2: CHANGE POLICIES
LHDs can also improve their accessibility for people with disabilities by implementing policies that promote accessibility, including using features of universal design, accessible transportation, and accessible communication devices. This can be accomplished using guidance from the CDC ([cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/accessibility.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/accessibility.html)).

STRATEGY 3: ADVERTISE EFFECTIVELY
Develop flyers, posters, and letters or e-mails with information about activities, including the date and time, location, how to participate, and how activities are relevant or helpful for intended participants. Adapt program content to increase accessibility for people with disabilities. For example, if working with individuals with developmental disabilities or partnering with organizations serving this population, LHDs should consult with partner organizations and obtain input in making materials more accessible and usable to people with developmental disabilities. This may include using more graphics and visual aids. Share this information with local disability organizations, residential facilities, and day programs and services to reach as many people with disabilities as possible. Ensure that advertising materials are accessible to many communities by using Braille or large font and other languages. The North Carolina Office on Disability and Health has a resource on accessible communication, available at [www.fpg.unc.edu/~ncodh/pdfs/rbtipsandstrategies.pdf](http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~ncodh/pdfs/rbtipsandstrategies.pdf).

STRATEGY 4: IMPROVE WEB ACCESSIBILITY
LHDs should also ensure that their websites are accessible and either fully section 508 compliant or meet some of the compliance criteria. More information on section 508 compliance and section 508 criteria is located on the Access Board website ([www.access-board.gov/508.htm](http://www.access-board.gov/508.htm)), which also offers a tool that will test the level of current section 508 compliance on existing webpages. For more information, visit [www.contentquality.com](http://www.contentquality.com).

Tip #2: Engage Supporters within the Health Community
Several LHDs encountered obstacles in obtaining the level of support (from LHD staff, board, and funding agencies) needed to effectively implement health promotion programs for people with disabilities. To address these challenges and increase awareness about the need to include programs for people with disabilities, LHDs can implement the following strategies.

STRATEGY 1: CROSS-TRAIN
LHDs should ensure all staff members are fully trained in working with people with disabilities, including accommodating cultural and linguistic sensitivity. Training should also include increasing staff awareness of the importance of including people with disabilities in all LHD health promotion efforts.

STRATEGY 2: DEVELOP THE CAPACITY TO OFFER HEALTH PROMOTION PROGRAMS FOCUSED ON PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
One such program, Healthy Lifestyles, is a free health promotion intervention offered by the Oregon Office on Disability and Health at Oregon Health & Sciences University (OHSU). The program is designed for people with disabilities to develop confidence and skills to live a healthy and happy life. LHD staff can become Healthy Lifestyles trainers through a train-the-trainer process offered by OHSU. For more information on the Healthy Lifestyles curriculum and train-the-trainer sessions, visit [www.ohsu.edu/oidd/oodh/hl/](http://www.ohsu.edu/oidd/oodh/hl/).

STRATEGY 3: COLLECT AND SHARE DATA
Include disability as a demographic item on all surveys completed by LHD consumers in all programs. This will allow for accurate measurement of programmatic success for people with disabilities.

SUCCESS STORY
NACCHO wanted to ensure staff learned the importance of making NACCHO’s website accessible for people with disabilities. Through several meetings with IT and Web staff, NACCHO increased its knowledge about strategies to approach section 508 compliance for the organization’s website. NACCHO’s Web Team reviewed the section 508 compliance criteria and identified next steps. The team plans to conduct trainings on ways to improve the website’s compliance.
Tip #3: Foster Community Partnerships

Community partnerships benefit LHDs and community stakeholders by (1) increasing the cultural appropriateness and effectiveness of LHD programs; (2) increasing LHD capacity to create programming that could not otherwise be developed or implemented due to cost constraints; (3) increasing the LHD’s ability to engage people with disabilities; and (4) strategically aligning the priorities of community organizations by integrating people with disabilities into current public health programming. LHDs can use the following techniques to foster important community partnerships.

STRATEGY 1: CONNECT

Work with disability organizations to begin to identify “community connectors,” people who are volunteers and leaders in the disability community who can take on a role connecting the health and disability communities. Community connectors help identify people with disabilities (including those who do not self-identify) and connect them with LHD resources.

STRATEGY 2: ENGAGE

Engage disability community members by seeking their input and guidance on local public health programs. Use a variety of strategies (e.g., meeting, surveys, focus groups) to enable people with disabilities to share their expertise on how the LHD can increase involvement and improve the scope and outcome of the program.

STRATEGY 3: REACH OUT TO THE COMMUNITY

Initiate conversations with interested community organizations and volunteers to discuss the development of clear goals, responsibilities, and action plans for health promotion efforts sponsored by LHDs. Community engagement and outreach activities can increase awareness of the importance of collaboration between LHDs and local disability organizations. Hold community meetings that are accessible and provide opportunities for community members to request information and give feedback on program activities. Exhibit booths at conferences or fairs are also settings for community engagement and outreach.

STRATEGY 4: SHARE DATA

Collect data from all activities (including health promotion surveys) and share the data with providers and other community organizations that would benefit from being involved.
The mission of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) is to be a leader, partner, catalyst, and voice for local health departments in order to ensure the conditions that promote health and equity, combat disease, and improve the quality and length of all lives.

1100 17th St, NW, 7th Floor Washington, DC 20036
P 202-783-5550 F 202-783-1583

[FACT SHEET]
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Participating Sites
Akron Health Department (OH)
Focus area: Disability Summit
www.ci.akron.oh.us/health04/

Alameda County Public Health Department (CA)
Focus area: Health Promotion/Healthy Living, Diabetes and Arthritis
www.acphd.org

Allegan County Health Department (MI)
Focus area: Healthy Lifestyles
www.allegancounty.org

Central Connecticut Health District (CT)
Focus area: Able to Be Healthy
www.ccthd.org

Charles County Health Department (MD)
Focus area: Healthy Lifestyles
www.charlescountyhealth.org

Cortland County Health Department (NY)
Focus area: Healthy Lifestyles
http://cchd.cortland-co.org

Franklin Regional Council of Governments (MA)
Focus area: Emergency Preparedness/Planning
www.frcog.org

Jefferson County Public Health (WA)
Focus area: Emergency Preparedness/Planning
www.co.jefferson.wa.us

Lee County Health Department (IA)
Focus area: Emergency Preparedness/Planning
www.leecountyhd.org

Madison County/London City Health District (OH)
Focus area: Healthy Lifestyles
http://co.madison.oh.us

Multnomah County Health Department (OR)
Focus area: Emergency Preparedness/Planning
www.mchealth.org

Nassau County Health Department (FL)
Focus area: Healthy Lifestyles
www.nassaucountyhealth.org

Osage County Health Department (OK)
Focus area: Health Promotion/Healthy Living, Diabetes and Arthritis
www.osage.health.ok.gov

Randolph Board of Health (MA)
Focus area: Emergency Preparedness/Planning
www.randolphboardofhealth.com

Suffolk County Health Department (NY)
Focus area: Healthy Lifestyles
www.suffolkcountyny.gov

Union County Health Department (OH)
Focus area: Healthy Lifestyles
www.uchd.net

Whiteside County Health Department (IL)
Focus area: Emergency Preparedness/Planning
www.whitesidehealth.org

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FOR MORE INFORMATION
To learn more about sites participating as demonstration or TA sites, visit www.naccho.org/topics/hpdp/healthdisa/. For more information or TA, contact NACCHO’s Health and Disability Project at disability@naccho.org.