

FAQ



Facilitator-Answered Questions

Call #3: October 25, 2018

Challenges and successes of program implementation in rural communities


Being a facilitator is a challenging and rewarding role, full of surprises and questions. Luckily, we have each other to talk to! This “FAQ” (Facilitator-Answered Questions) highlights some of the gems of wisdom that were shared on the third call in the **Living & Working Well Facilitator Peer-to-Peer series.**




Successful program implementation requires participation, but rural residents may face many barriers to access and participate in programs; these might include fewer (or no) transportation options, competition for time, insufficient infrastructure, lack of supporting resources, and fewer outreach and recruitment opportunities.

What are some of the barriers to successful program implementation in the rural communities in which you work?

Facilitator Answers

 “Just trying to find other people that would be interested is a challenge. And it’s a small community, very depressed community. So people aren’t really oriented towards living healthy here as a general rule and I grew up here so I have a sense of it. So that’s a challenge is getting enough people and interest to continue with classes on an ongoing basis. We have done a few classes and we have pretty much used up all of the people that we know of that have some interest. I think that’s our biggest challenge.”

 “I agree. That’s my biggest challenge, is to get people interested in the classes. When I first started working here, we had 12 to 14 people in our classes and now I’m struggling to get four or five people in a class.”

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Facilitator Answers (cont.)



“When you are working hard to just get your basic needs met, especially in an area where there are so few resources, it might be the least of your priorities to give your time and energy to a health promotion program. Community-building efforts and advocacy for rural issues can really help get more of those basic needs met so that more people can participate in programs or classes they might be interested in and further improve their quality of life.”



“Our center covers 17 counties. The towns are very spread out and to be able to get somebody from a different town to come to one of my classes is very difficult. I think a lot of people would like to try them. I have yet to do a class outside of our county, hoping that maybe in the future I can do that. You know, I may only end up with two or three clients from one specific county. So it makes it kind of tough to do a class in that county when you don't have a whole lot of people there.”



“We serve a metropolitan and a rural area and the rural challenge is transportation. We do provide transportation for the class, however, we have a boundary. So in order to get the people from the rural areas to where the classes are, that's been a big challenge. We were talking about having the class in some of the rural offices but the rural offices are very tiny so then we have to start looking for community centers in other areas to have the class in.”



What has worked for you to get around some of those barriers to participation and program sustainability in rural and non-rural areas?

Facilitator Answers



“When we did the first workshop in our office just five people showed up. But since I have a good relationship with one of the senior apartments in the area, I had a lot of consumers in that property where I scheduled a workshop and after my first workshop there, a lot of people heard about the workshop and they started signing up. And the success of that workshop in that senior apartment, the funny thing is that

they told me that they only show up – I mean, they just say hi to everyone and go to their own units, right? But now that since when I started that workshop, everybody wants to have a group. We have a support group in that senior apartment. Then they started having activities every month and they rotate who is going to do that scheduling. They started having swimming, aquatic therapy and they started walking. So now every month I have people signing up for the class.”



**How do you approach outreach and recruitment for rural participants?
How can you reach new people and pique their interest in programs?**

Facilitator Answers



“Something that has worked well is a lot of word of mouth from the previous graduates of the course. And I have a monthly reunion where I invite all of the workshop graduates and we have another sort of educational seminar maybe on finance or something and we provide lunch. I let them know we’re starting a new class and directly ask them, ‘Do you have friends, peers, anyone who would benefit from the course?’ and that’s a lot of the way that I populate each course that I do. It’s word of mouth and peer support. Spreading the word.”



“We use social media and Facebook because our consumers are connected to our Facebook page. We use that quite a bit, for everything from advertising a new class to updates on the current class that is going on to just kind of teasers to get people talking and calling. ‘What is this? What’s this about? What is this ‘Living Well with a Disability?’



“We have actually done videos on Facebook, where I have interviewed someone who has taken the class and that has agreed to be on social media with us. That has been effective for us. So many people in the rural communities are connected through social media because they are so far out and away from a lot of things going on.”



“I do love the idea of interviewing someone who has already gone through the class and posting a video instead of just the flier or some other type of accessible document.”



Outreach and recruitment can also involve building relationships with other community organizations. How do you communicate with other rural service providers and agencies?

Facilitator Answers



“We are active on social media with other CILs, other community partners, other agencies where we are swapping information.”



“Once a month all of the different providers in the area have a meeting and so I usually always talk to them about a class or anything that we’re offering and then they can offer it to the people they work with. I’ve found that advantageous.”



“We have a lot of consumers that have been referred by property managers and then I build relationships with them so that way when I need to help a consumer find housing, I might be able to place them if they have availability in that specific apartment.”



“I have a great relationship with the independent living advocates and I go to them and find out if they have consumers they are working with and especially the ones that are concentrated in the rural areas and if they have consumers that would benefit from the courses that we are teaching.”



About the Peer-to-Peer Series:

The Peer-to-Peer Series conference calls are free conference calls open to all *Living and Working Well with a Disability* facilitators. During each hour-long conference call, facilitators share their experiences, skills, and challenges with the group. Each call focuses on a topic related to facilitation. All *Living and Working Well with a Disability* facilitators are invited to participate in these free calls.

Quotations in this document are from participants in the third call (on program implementation in rural settings) which took place on October 25, 2018. They have been edited for clarity.

Looking for more Living and Working Well with a Disability facilitator resources?

- Visit the [Living and Working Well with a Disability program website](#).
- Email livingwell@ruralinstitute.umt.edu for more information, resources, and to be added to the Living and Working Well listserv.

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**Living  Working
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