

Arkansas



Seniors Get Peppy with PEPPI

For Americans and Arkansans alike, physical activity is one of the most important things they can do for their health. It can prevent many health problems that seem to come with age, including stroke and heart disease. Researchers report that physical activity helps reduce the risk of chronic diseases, aids in chronic disease management, and allows people to stay independent. Arkansas is among the top 10 states for stroke and heart disease deaths, so the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) and their partners trained leaders to teach exercise classes designed for adults aged 65 or older in communities across the state. Most participants reported positive outcomes, and health officials expect improvements to continue.

Public Health Problem

Arkansas resident Mary Caruth, age 77, woke up from heart bypass surgery and realized that getting through the surgery was only half the battle. Like thousands of heart disease patients across the state, Mary needed help getting back to her daily routine.

- Arkansas leads the nation in stroke mortality and ranks in the top 10 for deaths due to heart disease. The medical costs to treat these two diseases exceed \$1 billion.
- Although only one in five Arkansas adults is aged 65 or older, this group is at a substantially increased risk for stroke and heart disease.
- If you put all adult Arkansans in a line, the life of every other person would be threatened by the risk factors of physical inactivity and obesity.

Taking Action

In 2008, ADH launched a program to help older Arkansans lose weight, feel better, and reduce the impact of heart disease and stroke. The exercise program, Peer Exercise Program Promotes Independence, or PEPPI, is especially designed for older adults

and is based on research conducted through the National Institute on Aging. From 2008 through 2011, the Preventive Health and Health Services (PHHS) Block Grant funded classroom materials and training supplies to prepare peer leaders and master coordinators to teach PEPPI.

The following are central to the program's success:

- Active partnerships included the Donald W. Reynolds Institute on Aging, the Area Agencies on Aging, the Healthy Aging Coalition, and local community partners statewide.
- Older adult leaders are trained in leading exercises to increase flexibility, balance, strength, and endurance.
- PEPPI helps older adults learn how to exercise correctly in a safe environment among people of similar ages and health conditions—even those who are inactive and use walkers, canes, or wheelchairs.
- Classes are promoted and offered in the local community, including locations such as senior centers, churches, nursing homes, housing complexes, and doctors' offices.

Healthy People Objective
Physical Activity in Adults

PHHS Block Grant Funding
Less than 10%—Minimal source of funding



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For more information on the
PHHS Block Grant, go to

www.cdc.gov/phhsblockgrant



For more information on
Healthy People, go to

www.healthypeople.gov

Impact

Mary Caruth reports, "I am confident that the strength I gained from participating in the PEPPI program helped my rehab to be a success."

Thanks in part to PHHS Block Grant funding, ADH, and their partners, PEPPI has spread throughout the state. Key results include the following:

- PEPPI classes have been conducted in 70 Arkansas communities by nearly 300 trained peer leaders and master coordinators.

- More than 800 Arkansas adults aged 65 or older have taken part in the program statewide.
- Most participants reported an improvement in endurance and lower body strength, and roughly half reported improvement in four other fitness measures.

In early 2012, the PEPPI program lost 200 trained leaders and coordinators because of budget cuts, leaving many older Arkansans without this resource. The program still continues in some communities through the Arkansas Health Education Centers and various agencies for the aging population. Hopefully, the program will be fully restored and expanded, if funding becomes available.

The Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant is managed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Population Health, in collaboration with state health departments. The PHHS Block Grant supports prevention efforts in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, 8 US territories, and 2 American Indian tribes.

PHHS Block Grant Supports

Arkansas Healthy People Priorities

The PHHS Block Grant provides flexible funding that states can use to prevent and control chronic diseases, respond quickly to outbreaks of infections and waterborne diseases, and address their specific public health needs. States can align their programs with health objectives from *Healthy People 2020*.

Arkansas uses its funds to address five health objective priorities:

- Tuberculosis.
- Primary and Secondary Syphilis.
- Gonorrhea.
- Chlamydia.
- Rape or Attempted Rape.

For a complete list of funded health objectives, go to
<http://www.cdc.gov/phhsblockgrant/stateHPprior.htm>.