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## Highlights from the Ever Active Adults (EAA) Evaluation Report

The risks of sedentary lifestyles for older adults are well known. An active lifestyle (i.e., one with regular physical activity) improves older adults' quality of life and independence. Regular physical activity will also reduce the risk of many chronic health diseases (Health Canada, ALCOA, & CSEP, 1999).

Ever Active Adults (EAA) is an evidence-based course and curriculum that provides physical activity training for practitioners working in Alberta seniors' housing. Participants in EAA receive training on how to increase physical activity opportunities for older adult residents.

The Alberta Centre for Active Living initially developed EAA in collaboration with the Alberta Fitness Leadership Certification Association (AFLCA) and other partners. (The EAA is now offered by the AFLCA.)

Before EAA, Alberta lacked a standardized training program for physical activity practitioners in seniors' housing. Other leadership training programs did not offer training specifically for practitioners working in Alberta seniors' housing, nor did these programs incorporate the determinants of health into their design or delivery.

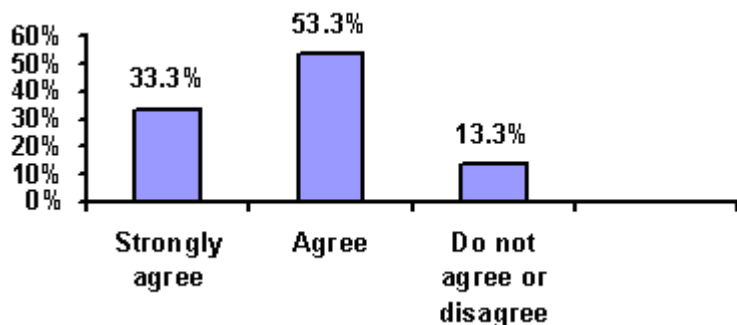
EAA aims to improve the quality of life of lodge residents by increasing opportunities for physical activity in Alberta seniors' lodges. The evaluation findings indicate that the EAA course was successful overall in achieving its goals. We hope that these results will guide other stakeholders and policy-makers in developing and supporting older adult physical activity programs and policies.

### Summing up the EAA Evaluation Report

In 2004, the Alberta Centre for Active Living assessed EAA's effectiveness. Most course participants found the program very valuable in several ways. Our evaluation revealed that EAA-trained coordinators had five main perceptions resulting from their EAA training.

#### 1. The EAA course gave coordinators the tools and knowledge needed to increase physical activity opportunities in their lodges.

The results in the graph below show that 87% of participants either strongly agreed or agreed that the EAA course gave them the tools and knowledge needed to increase physical activity opportunities in their lodges.



#### 2. The EAA course and curriculum positively affected coordinators' practices (their training provided resources that allowed them to successfully modify or implement physical activity programs).

Eighty per cent of respondents reported changes in their exercise programs. These changes mainly took the form of new and different ways to exercise.

#### 3. Coordinators perceived positive changes in their lodges' social and (to a lesser extent) physical environments after implementing physical activity program changes.

Ninety-two per cent of respondents felt that the lodge's social environment had positively changed since implementing the physical activity programming changes.

Seventy per cent of the responses also reported positive changes in their lodges' physical environments since implementing the physical activity program changes.

#### 4. Coordinators realized that lodge residents' well-being and quality of life could be positively affected by appropriate physical activity programs.

Sample quotes from respondents reveal what they learned from the course. For example, one respondent realized "how important activity is to healthy living" and "the importance of motivating residents to take part in activities." Another stated, "it doesn't have to be a specific exercise program alone, but many different activities together." One respondent had changed her own behaviour, "drinking more water and doing more exercise/walking."

#### 5. Coordinators identified receiving support from residents and managers as key in allowing them to implement and support their lodges' physical activity programs.

Support from residents (e.g., participating in physical activity programs) and managers (e.g., providing adequate space for programs) were key in allowing coordinators to implement and support lodges' physical activity programs. The most common barrier to implementing change was lack of time.

### How the Centre Designed this Evaluation

The Alberta Centre for Active Living invited participants who attended EAA courses in March 2003 to take part in this evaluation. The centre mailed the EAA evaluation package to 34 EAA-trained lodge coordinators. Fifteen surveys were completed (a return rate of 44.11%).

The extent to which a relatively low return rate may have influenced the results remains unclear. Using a survey also somewhat limited the quality of information that we collected. Notably, the questions did not allow respondents to elaborate their responses or to clarify them. A pre-determined budget, human resource limitations, and time constraints determined this choice of evaluation method.

Despite these constraints, we are confident that our findings reflect overall how respondents perceive the changes in their physical activity programs as a result of their EAA training.

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[Full evaluation report](#) (pdf - 8pgs, 13KB)

### References

- Health Canada, ALCOA, & CSEP. (1999). Canada's physical activity guide to healthy active living for older adults. Ottawa, ON: Health Canada.