

PHYSICAL LITERACY for Older Adults

An Ontario Sport and Recreation Community Fund Project



“ Canadian older adults over the age 55 years are the most inactive segment of the population despite the well-established health benefits of physical activity for an aging population. ”

~Chodzko-Zajko, Schwingel, & Chae, 2009; Paterson, Jones, & Rice, 2007; Paterson & Warburton, 2010

This project, a partnership between the Sport for Life Society, the cities of Markham and St. Catharines, the Town of Aurora and Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, aims to increase awareness and education about physical literacy as it applies to the older adult population, and build the capacity of those who work with and support older adults. The project builds on plans Markham and St. Catharines have developed to date, as well as relationships Aurora has created with local family health teams. Between February 2018 to March 2019, the development of physical literacy in older adults will be supported in four ways: education, training, assessment and program development.



EDUCATION

An awareness campaign will be created and implemented to improve physical literacy knowledge among 4,000 older adults (age 55+), healthcare professionals, exercise specialists, and care providers. This may include advertisements for city program guides, promotional material for display in partner sites, media releases and social media posts about the benefits of physical literacy in older adults along with targeted meetings and workshops.



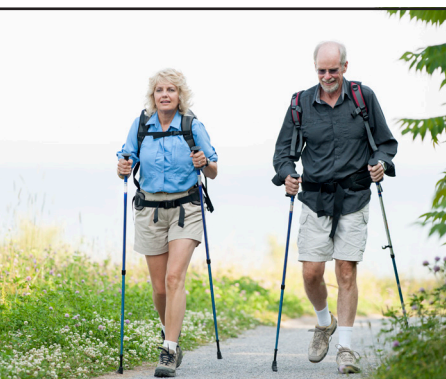
TRAINING

Over 500 healthcare professionals, exercise specialists and recreational program staff will be trained through workshops on physical literacy for older adults. These workshops will provide an interactive experience in application of physical literacy in a variety of settings. A minimum of 3 workshops will be provided to each community.



ASSESSMENT

Modified physical literacy assessment tools will be developed and used to better understand physical literacy in over 100 older adults. Baseline physical literacy data will be collected in one community using the adapted physical literacy tool for older adults piloted by Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre.



PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

A program for referring 600+ older adult patients to community recreation/fitness centers will be established with a group of health professionals. Health professionals, in particular Primary Care Physicians, will be identified, engaged and encouraged to write an exercise/activity prescription/referral for patients that would be delivered at an identified community based facility to improve the patients exercise capacity and quality of life, promote lifelong heart-healthy lifestyles, and most importantly, to reduce future risk of chronic disease.



In the older adult population, the ability and confidence of an individual to participate in various physical activities is a strong predictor of participation levels. Awareness and education of physical literacy as it applies to the older adult population, informing the strategies of physical activity advocates, promoters and facilitators, and older adults themselves, may be the missing link in the achieving a sustained increase in physical activity participation in this group.