

Local community development in the municipalities *HEALTHY SENIORS* Partnership for prevention and quality of life



Values and vision

Health and the ability to function are decisive for the quality of life in later years and also have significant social impact. The HEALTHY SENIORS project works to contribute to link the elderly to the local community's organizations and meeting grounds through physical activity contributing to better health and less isolation. The local organizations/sports clubs are challenged to provide exercise for the elderly and physical activities in various forms for the age group. Through this work the organizations/sports clubs have a good opportunity to promote seniors as resources in the local community that clubs and organizations can exploit.

- Healthy Seniors in Østfold will form local partnerships involved in precautionary work.
- Healthy Seniors in Østfold will improve health and increase the number of social meeting grounds for seniors
- Healthy Seniors will prevent injuries and accidents
- Healthy Seniors in Østfold wants to promote seniors as resources in the local community
- Healthy Seniors is based on central principles in HEPROGRESS: Empowerment and equalization of social inequalities in health.

Background for the project

- The importance of physical activity for seniors

Healthy Seniors

Written by Administrator

Thursday, 01 September 2011 19:53

The number of seniors in Norway is increasing, and the relative numbers of the oldest are increasing. The elderly make up more than half the volume of the health service.

Health and the ability to function are decisive for the quality of life in later years and also have significant social impact. Physical activity can both improve the capacity to function in the elderly and at the same time contribute to prevent welfare diseases in advanced years, such that one remains self-reliant as long as possible. Physical passiveness weakens the ability to function and almost doubles the risk of mortality, coronaries, type 2 diabetes, colon cancer and osteoporosis with fractures.

For many, physical activity has become a habit and need that lasts their whole lives. However, many seniors have neither the habit or need for physical activity. The challenge is to find measures that establish and maintain motivation among these.

Physical inactivity is a central risk factor for premature death, ill-health and reduced ability to function in advanced years. Regular physical activity is decisive for the self-reliance and quality of life of the elderly. Even the very old achieve benefits from exercise, both in terms of stamina and muscular strength.

- Inclusion in the local community

Loneliness can be viewed as a measure of whether inhabitants feel included in the local community and whether they have a contact network that is perceived as satisfactory. A community with a high number of lonely people is a community with little union and closeness between people. For individuals, loneliness is an important indicator of a lack of well-being in life – a poor quality of life.

Poor health can lead to more loneliness, and a feeling of loneliness can lead to poor health. It may be the case that persons with reduced health and functional capacity do not master or have the capacity for social contact. If one also has left the workforce, one does not have the same contact with colleagues that one once had.

- Need for the elderly in working life

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Demographic changes, with small cohorts in young working age and large cohorts about to leave the workforce through pensions, has sparked the authorities to implement measures to keep more people in the workforce for longer.

Poor physical health is one of several obstacles to remain working. It is particularly after the ages of 55 and 60 that retirement takes place.

Many of the elderly are inactive, for several reasons. Low threshold measures, such as Seniotrim organized by the local sports club, are activities that are suitable for both the inactive and active. Seniotrim is a measure with a local profile, short distances, inclusion in a larger community and low prices. The activities must require a minimum of equipment and no particular skills. They must be easily accessible, both physically, socially and culturally.

- Fall accidents worsen health – the large number of elderly may generate drastic costs

The consequences of fall accidents are huge in terms of both life and social economy. Fall accidents are the main cause of hip fractures. Accidents among the elderly and in particular fall accidents lead to a significantly reduced quality of life and to great suffering/death. In socio-economic terms this causes large expenses, and the municipalities foot most of the bill.

Goal

The target groups for HEALTHY SENIORS are students, persons above the age of 60, groups with low socio-economic status and immigrants. The project will contribute toward establishing more meeting grounds across generations and between cultures.

The goal is to stimulate vibrant, preventive and health-promoting local communities that build bridges between social groups and generations, establish a sense of belonging and make the inhabitants proud of their local community. The project will build bridges between generations and cultures.

Target groups

- Students
- Persons above the age of 60
- Groups with low socio-economic status
- Inhabitants with multicultural backgrounds.

Strategy

Each project municipality is to establish a partnership, for example between the sports club/other voluntary organizations and representatives from the municipality's care services and precautionary work. The project group will prepare a local plan for precautionary activities in accordance with the project's goals and contribute locally to establish groups for exercise for the elderly and social meeting grounds.

The project will:

1. Develop local partnerships for precautionary work and quality of life through public (municipal care services) and voluntary forces that can remain viable even after the project period.
2. Build and develop universally designed and inclusive meeting grounds for physical, social and cultural activities across generations.
3. Use local forces as communicators of culture, hereunder use seniors as cultural resources towards each other and younger generations.
4. Work to demonstrate that the project has significant inter-municipal relevance because it is self-financing in a socio-economic perspective, by e.g. preventing injuries and accidents such as hip fractures.
5. Extend the project to include several municipalities in the region.
6. Coordinate regional, financial and professional instruments with the county governor and county in order to contribute toward realizing the project's goals.
7. Involve more inactive inhabitants above the age of 60 in active exercise and more social company where one puts in an extra effort to mobilize inhabitants with low socio-economic status and immigrant backgrounds.

The meeting grounds should also provide opportunities for information, the exchange of experiences and discussion of various subjects such as quality of life, a health-promoting lifestyle and prevention of accidents and injuries. Universal design and inclusion must characterize the project where work **is done to equalize social health differences (immigration/integration)**.

Measures

1. Facilitate, initiate and be the driving force for physical activities and social/cultural meeting grounds such as exercise for the target group above the age of 60. Initially in the municipalities of Fredrikstad, Rakkestad, Spydeberg, Fredrikstad and the county's other urban municipalities.
2. Seniortrim wishes to be future-oriented instrument that seniors can use to promote health and functional ability. Seniortrim is provided 1-2 days a week at org./sports club in each participating municipality in the summer/autumn period 2011-2014.

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3. Develop local concepts for interaction across generations and community groups.
4. Obtain local exercise statistics at start up and work to obtain annual statistics at the municipal level.
5. Communicate experiences from the project to other municipalities and communities domestically and internationally through cooperating networks
6. Build local competence on promoting quality of life, cultural experiences, mastery and prevention with employees in the care services and in local voluntary organizations.
7. Entrench the work in local social planning
8. Evaluation of organization of exercise groups, social meeting grounds, activity to materialize the cooperation reform's preventive part.
9. Emphasize certain cultural monuments as four goals that are as accessible as possible for all.

Exercise activities, participation and fractures per municipality before, during and after the project period, may be relevant target parameters. Østfold analysis/evaluation partners...

Project management:

Healthy seniors is a part of HEPROGRESS and the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development's focus on local social development in the municipalities in NORWAY. The project was initiated by Østfold county and the regional partnership The Public Health Programme in Østfold. The project is however headed by Østfold Idrettskrets, which is a partner in The Public Health Programme.