

New Hampshire's Innovative Approach to Inclusive Health

Nurse Practitioner Fellows Learn Adapted, Evidence-Based Intervention Techniques to Reduce Obesity among Youth with Disabilities

According to the 2016-17 National Survey of Children's Health, 36% of New Hampshire (NH) families include at least one child with special health care needs or functional difficulties. Overweight and obesity rates are especially concerning among these youth. Twenty-six percent (26%) of NH children with special health care needs between the ages of 10 and 17 are overweight or obese, including 11.4% whose body mass index (BMI) falls into the obese range. Overweight and obesity can lead to an increased risk of chronic disease such as Type 2 diabetes, heart problems, high blood pressure, and other health difficulties.

Partners from the University of New Hampshire Institute on Disability, Granite State Independent Living, Southern NH Area Health Education Center, and Lamprey Health Center collaborated to train a group of nurse practitioners in an evidence-based intervention to reduce obesity among youth with disabilities. The nurse practitioners used scenarios based on real-life experiences of people with disabilities and practiced motivational interviewing strategies.

Participants said that as a result of the training they would "Keep an open mind;" "be more conscious and deliberate with language and words [they use];" and "incorporate 'change talk' to improve successful behavior."

Following training, the nurse practitioners reported increased knowledge and skills, including a 43% increase in the ability to discuss what disability means; a 41% increase in the ability to communicate effectively with and about people with disabilities; and a 69% increase in the ability to adapt motivational interviewing to work with parents and youth with disabilities.

One of the nurse practitioners later told of using the new strategies with a 17-year-old boy with disabilities. At his follow-up visit a few months after starting the intervention, she found that he was concentrating on healthy eating and had lost a significant amount of weight. "The strategies were right on target," she said.

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Six Nurse Practitioner Fellows at Lamprey Health Center received training in an evidence-based intervention to prevent childhood obesity. *Brief Motivational Interviewing to Reduce Child Body Mass Index (BMI²)* was adapted for use with children and youth with disabilities by the [National Center for Health, Physical Activity, and Disability \(NCHPAD\)](http://www.nchpad.org).