

Checklist for Structured Physical Activity Programs for Older Adults

This checklist provides a brief method for assessing the quality of structured physical activity programs for older adults. The purpose of the checklist is to help community teams to “ask the right questions” about a specific physical activity intervention, and to weigh the pros and cons of different interventions. It was developed by selected experts involved in the National Blueprint: Increasing Physical Activity Among Adults Aged 50 and Older (www.agingblueprint.org).

The checklist items are derived in part from Cress, M. et al. (2004). ACSM Best Practices Statement—Physical activity programs and behavior counseling in older adult populations. *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*, 36(11). 1997-2003.

This article is summarized in NCOA’s Center for Healthy Aging issue brief, *Designing Safe and Effective Physical Activity Programs*, which can be downloaded from the following site: www.healthyagingprograms.org/content.asp?sectionid=73&ElementID=98.

Checklist Questions

1. Does the program incorporate safe and effective endurance, strength, balance, and flexibility components that are tailored to meet the needs of the participants?
2. Does the program offer group-based physical activity options with instruction in proper technique, and qualified supervision?
3. Does the program regularly re-assess the recommended intensity, duration, and frequency of physical activity for all participants?
4. Does the endurance-related component of the program involve large muscle groups and is it sustained for at least 10 minutes for beginners with an eventual goal of 30 minutes of moderate intensity activity for most participants?
5. Does the program offer opportunities for both upper and lower body resistance exercise in which the workload is re-assessed on a regular basis and increased as appropriate?
6. Does the program provide opportunities for participation in flexibility and stretching activities that facilitate increased range of motion?
7. Does the program include opportunities for both static and dynamic balance activities?
8. Does the program assess the functional fitness (including cardiovascular, strength, flexibility, and balance) levels of participants on a regular (at least annual) basis?
9. Does the program include a variety of support strategies designed to maximize recruitment, increase motivation for exercise progression, and minimize attrition?
Consider the following (a-f):
 - a. pre-activity physical activity counseling

- b. individualized goal setting sessions
 - c. pairing participants with exercise buddies
 - d. telephone or mail follow-up of individuals with repeated absences
 - e. inviting family and friends to attend orientation meetings and social events
 - f. other strategies _____ (describe)
10. Does the program have a systematic and approved strategy for risk management and prevention of activity-related injuries?
11. Does the program have a formal emergency management protocol, including written emergency procedures posted in a readily accessible location?
12. Are program personnel trained in CPR and first aid?

Additional Description of the Program

The following questions provide valuable information but they cover material that is NOT included in the ACSM Best Practice document.

13. Does the program clearly target a population in need of physical activity programs?
14. Does the program include diversity of participants (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, functional status)?
15. Can this program be implemented in a variety of settings?
16. Does the program offer strategies to modify program components to meet a variety of older adult needs, especially the more frail older adult?