

Promising Practices - Planning Physical Activity and Sport Initiatives for LSES Mothers



Mothers in Motion Community Grants

In 2010, the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS) collaborated with 8 communities as part of the *Mothers in Motion* Community Grant Program. CAAWS' goals for the pilot projects were to support different approaches for healthy living and physical activity programs for low socioeconomic status (LSES) mothers and women; to improve the *Mothers in Motion* project; and, to support other community-based healthy active living programs for LSES mothers and women.

Following is a list of the names and locations of the eight communities selected for funding:

- **Soccer London Moms in Motion (SLMIM)** – GOLS Soccer School (London, ON)
- **Groovin' at the Park** – City of Swift Current (Swift Current, SK)
- **SELFF (Skills, Education, Learning, Fitness and Fun) – Moms Making the Move** – Supportive Housing for Young Mothers (Mulgrave, NS)
- **JEEP (Jouer Ensemble Enfant et Parent) en Route** – Société de la Petite Enfance et de la Famille du Sud de l'Alberta (Calgary, AB)
- **Moms Making the Move** – Kids First Association (Sherbrooke, NS)
- **TNS Moms on the Run "Sun Run in Training"** – Terrace Nisga'a Society (Terrace, BC)
- **Maman en mouvement** – Centre de Ressources Familiales de la Péninsule Acadienne (Caraquet, NB)
- **Moms in Motion** – Tupper St. Family Resource Centre (Portage, MB).

"Being healthy makes everyday tasks easier and more enjoyable – this is motivating."

"Being in better shape helps me enjoy my family more."

"It feels good to be healthy and know that there is a program that recognizes how many moms can use the break."

What worked well?

- Hosting the program at the same time as children's scheduled activities helps address barriers such as time constraints and childcare, allowing a greater number of mothers to participate.
- Having certified personal trainers and group exercise leaders to lead the sessions and support the mothers in reaching their personal fitness and health goals is something women appreciated.
- Offering a variety of activities (e.g. aerobics, zumba, yoga and belly dancing) in different locations (park, recreation complex, etc.) that can be adjusted to different levels (beginner to advanced) attracts more women.
- Providing childcare and travel assistance and/or subsidies allow more mothers to participate.
- Hosting events and activities at different locations help overcome access and transportation issues. Be sure to give maps and public transportation directions.
- Having participant input from the onset is key to a program's success.

Recommendations

- Joining a new group can be intimidating. Happy, friendly and knowledgeable staff will create an inclusive environment, making mothers feel more comfortable and welcome. Encourage camaraderie among the participants and with group leaders. Encourage participants to bring a friend to make it easier and less intimidating.
 - Mothers should be allowed to join a program at any point. If they find out about a 10-week program on week 6, provide some way they can still join or drop in.
 - Cultural and religious holidays, as well as children's community sport programming and family events, must be considered when developing program schedules.
 - Mothers are busy and it can be very difficult to find time for fitness and physical activity. Involve mothers from the beginning to assist in the planning, scheduling, delivery, marketing and evaluation to create a sense of ownership and ensure the activities reflect the true interests and needs of mothers.
- Encourage communication and create a safe space to express themselves freely and to ask questions.
- Respect cultural beliefs and practices, and understand how they influence attitudes and behaviours around physical activity and health.
 - Regular communication with both participants and partners is essential for developing and implementing a successful program. Ask participants to support each other by offering rides, sharing childcare, etc.
- It is important that activities are fun, novel, and personally challenging. Offer activities in a private and safe environment where participants can comfortably try new activities and push their limits.
- Take home materials are a great way to extend the reach of physical activity and healthy eating programs, providing mothers with the tools they need to maintain a healthy lifestyle for themselves and their families once the program is over.
- Some mothers enjoy having children participate while others enjoy the 'break'. Asking mothers whether or not they want their children to be involved needs to be asked at the beginning as it will vary depending on the group.

For more information on the results of the 2010 Mothers in Motion Community Grants, visit: www.caaws.ca/mothersinmotion/e/lowstatus/documents/Community_Grants_Wrap_up.pdf

DEC. 2011

Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS) Tel: 613-562-5667

For more information on CAAWS' *Mothers in Motion* project, please contact caaws@caaws.ca or visit the website at www.caaws.ca/mothersinmotion/e/.

Support for this project provided by:

Ontario
Trillium
Foundation



Fondation
Trillium
de l'Ontario



Canadian Association for the
Advancement of Women
and Sport and Physical Activity

Association canadienne pour
l'avancement des femmes
du sport et de l'activité physique

mothers in motion