

GHWIC Success Story

Sault Ste Marie Tribe: Physical Activity Referral Program

Sault Tribe Community Health's **Physical Activity Referral Program** spans across GHWIC strategies, supporting patients in preventing and managing chronic health conditions like heart disease, hypertension, diabetes and obesity. This program was developed with GHWIC funds over the past 7 years.

The **Physical Activity Referral Program** staff worked with internal partners to develop a case management group. Beginning in Spring 2021, program staff met regularly with non-physician health team members in which they shared clients/patients with or at high risk for high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol or other risk factors. They use these meetings to collaboratively determine how best to help shared patients/clients manage their conditions through diet and exercise. Registered dietitians and nurses work together within the parameters of each individual issue in an effort to get clients to increase their activity levels and reduce their disease.

To receive help from the **Physical Activity Referral Program** staff, patients can obtain a referral from their provider to see an exercise specialist who helps them create a custom fitness plan to manage their condition(s). Consultations and sessions focused on functional movement last between 30 and 60 minutes. During this time, staff and the patient work on stretching, strength training, and/or cardiovascular exercises. The program also incorporates opportunities for culturally-relevant group exercise through activities such as snowshoeing, hiking and kayaking, promoting and utilizing safe community walking trails. To make kayaking (a traditional physical activity for Anishinaabe people) available to their clients, staff members completed Level 1 ACA Kayak Trainings.

To track their progress, participants can record their steps or number of miles walked, jogged, or biked, share these numbers with the exercise specialist at their appointments, and have their progress marked on a common map. Participants also keep a fitness log, which includes educational tables on cholesterol, diabetes, and blood pressure, and allows them to track their weight, glucose levels, blood pressure, and other biomarkers. At the end of Year 2, 50 participants graduated from this program.

HIGHLIGHTS:

In the second year of programming, 67 patients were engaged in the **Physical Activity Referral Program**.

In the first two years, **50 participants graduated** from the program.