



Therapeutic Activation Program for Seniors (Valley Community Services)

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PROGRAM PROFILE: OVERVIEW

June 2017

Type of program	Health and Wellness
Organization	Valley Community Services
Location	Creston, B.C.
Community served	Isolated seniors who need support to access programs
Program Goal	Decrease isolation for seniors with barriers to accessing community resources
Services Provided	Therapeutic program available five days a week. Includes transportation (to program), physical and educational activities and a nutritious lunch
Staffing	3 full-time staff plus volunteer support
Program Strengths	Offers programming for isolated seniors, Provides transportation assistance to access program, Strong community support, Offers meals, Fills in a service gap for seniors with lower level health care needs

Program Description

The Therapeutic Activation Program for Seniors, commonly known as TAPS, is a wellness program located in Creston, B.C. The program primarily supports isolated seniors who are experiencing barriers in accessing community resources.

While TAPS uses a similar model to most adult day services offered through health authorities, its work with older adults focuses more on health promotion, wellness, and socialization. In addition, while TAPS' participants may have cognitive impairments or health conditions, they generally have lower healthcare needs than those in traditional adult day services. If TAPS participants end up requiring a higher level of care, they are referred to the local health authority adult day service.

The TAPS program operates Monday to Friday, and most participants attend 2-3 days a week. TAPS calls participants each morning to check-in with them, to see how they are doing and to arrange for transportation, if needed. The organization has two vehicles they use to transport participants who live within 15 km. Activities are organized in the morning and afternoon and usually alternate between a physical activity (e.g., swimming, walking, tai chi, etc.) and an educational/creative activity (e.g., singing, computer lessons, etc.). Lunch is provided every day for a cost of \$6 to participants. Anyone is able to refer someone to the TAPS program and applicants are interviewed to see if they are a fit for the program.

Three full-time staff members work for TAPS. They are supported by 16 active volunteers, who are primarily seniors themselves. There is a larger pool of an additional 20 volunteers who help at special events or other fundraising activities. TAPS gives other seniors an opportunity to volunteer and create peer connections, and training is provided once a year to volunteers, plus additional workshops.

Currently TAPS is funded through grants (federal, provincial, and regional), individual and community donations, and planned giving. Participants who require transportation to the program more than twice a week

also pay a monthly transportation charge of \$25. The total cost for the program is approximately \$150,000 per year (approximately \$2,500 per person per year for an average of 60 clients, which is about \$15-25 per person per day).

Impacts

The TAPS program connects isolated seniors who face challenges accessing programs and services on their own. The program enables seniors to access activities, nutritious meals and social support, and to get connected to other community services. For some participants, the program may be their only weekly activity and the program has been shown to provide seniors with inspiration and motivation for living a full life. The program creates a sense of community for the seniors – it provides participants with opportunities to connect with, and support, each other.

“Suddenly I have a life. I now know people when I go in public. The exercises helped a great deal. I do activities I don’t do at home, and I get hugs which is very important when you’re alone.”

-TAPS Participant

The TAPS program is in high demand. They currently have 54 clients and there is usually a waiting list. TAPS also provides an opportunity for respite for caregivers, which is especially important for those who support the approximately 30% of program participants who are in the early stages of dementia.

Strengths and Challenges

When the TAPS program first started it was a Ministry of Health run mental health program for seniors experiencing isolation and depression, and at one time there were several TAPS programs being run on Vancouver Island and in the Interior. But in 2005, the priorities of Interior Health Authority changed, and they stopped funding TAPS programs. After this funding cut, TAPS in Creston was faced with stopping programming. Over time, all of the TAPS programs folded except for the program in Creston due to Valley Community Services Society (then known as Creston and District Community Resource Center Society) taking over the operation of the TAPS program. The community came together and was eventually able to secure funding to resume operating 5 days a week. With these funding changes, the program is now highly reliant on grants, creating a number of challenges for the program. It means more staff time is spent applying for grants and, yet, it is often difficult to get regular staffing costs covered by grants. In addition, available grants often only fund new and/or “innovative” programs, making it hard for an ongoing program such as TAPS to fit into the funder criteria.

The TAPS program benefits from strong community support, funding and involvement, which were key factors in sustaining the program when its funding was cut. Through the assistance of the Columbia Basin Trust, TAPS was fortunate to recently secure a ten-year lease with the community recreation centre for space. TAPS regularly partners with local community organizations. For example, the program accesses fitness equipment at the recreation centre, works with the school district to offer intergenerational programs, and receives fundraising support from local service/community clubs.

TAPS works in collaboration with Interior Health Authority and Interior Health Authority gives high praise to the Valley Community Services in how they support seniors in their community. The TAPS program fills an important service gap in the health care continuum, serving seniors who are unable to independently access

programs offered by the seniors' clubs and recreation centre, but are too well to qualify for the health authority adult day service. TAPS supports seniors' food security by providing meals, which is especially important since, there is no Meals on Wheels program in Creston. TAPS has run a frozen meal program in the past and is hoping to secure funding to restart this program in the future.