

## TESTIMONIALS

Some older adults with disabilities participated in senior centre programs in Winnipeg. Those involved in the process shared their experiences.

### Older adults with disabilities said:

*"I want to get together with older people because I am old. I want to make friends with old people. It makes me happy inside. I want to be with them"*

*"I want to try new things and it is good for us to get out."*

### Support workers said:

*"I understand how important it is to include people with disabilities into the community, to be accepted, and feel like they belong. It's a good thing because she talks to seniors and she met lots of people. She has friends now."*

*"People just don't know how to approach people with a disability. I think that myself being a connector helped."*

### A senior centre staff said:

*"When he was there regularly, he became part of the class. People were happy to have him there."*

Photo Credits:  
All three photos in this brochure courtesy of the Manitoba Association of Senior Centres

### Looking for a senior centre in your neighbourhood?

Visit the Manitoba Association of Senior Centres website for a list of senior centres in the province: <http://www.manitobaseniorcentres.com>.

To learn about available programs and services, contact your senior centre directly.

The Canadian Centre on Disability Studies (CCDS) conducted a research initiative, 'Inclusive Senior Centres Project', in partnership with the Manitoba Association of Senior Centres and Winnserv Inc. It is sponsored by the Winnipeg Foundation. This brochure was developed based on the findings of the project.



CCDS also developed **Senior Centre User Guide for Older Adults with Intellectual Disabilities, and Their Families, Friends, and Support Workers**. To download this guide, click the following link:

<http://disabilitystudies.ca/senior-centres/>

### The Canadian Centre on Disability Studies (CCDS)

If you have any questions or comments about the information in this brochure, please contact CCDS.

56 The Promenade  
Winnipeg, MB R3B 3H9  
<http://disabilitystudies.ca>  
204-287-8411



## Guide for Support Workers for Older Adults with Intellectual Disabilities

*How to Facilitate the Participation and Social Inclusion of Older Adults with Intellectual Disabilities in Senior Centres*



## Why Go to a Senior Centre?

Senior Centres are health promoting, capacity building, and community focal points on aging where older persons come together for services and activities that enhance their dignity, support their independence and encourage their involvement in and with the community.

Senior centres provide opportunities for older adults to socialize, maintain an active healthy lifestyle, learn new things, and have fun. Many older adults with intellectual disabilities don't know much about senior centres, and therefore miss out on opportunities that centres offer. Senior centres are a place where older adults with disabilities can meet with others of similar age and be a part of a community.

## Senior Centre Programs and Activities

Programs and activities are diverse. They include games, exercise, coffee or lunch gatherings, cooking, crafts, computer classes, support groups, outings, and information sessions. The length of programs vary from one-time activities to sessions lasting several months. Some programs are free to members.

## Role of Support Workers

When needed, support workers can play a critical role in facilitating their social interactions and meaningful engagement in senior centre programs and activities.

It is important that support workers:

- ◆ see the value of older adults with disabilities' participation in senior centres,
- ◆ have good social and communication skills,
- ◆ work well with older adults and senior centre staff, and have advocacy skills.

## 10 Tips for Support Workers

To better assist older adults with disabilities to participate in senior centre programs and activities.

### 1) *Take a tour and try out different programs and activities with the person*

Many senior centres welcome individuals to try out their programs and activities. Find activities that meet the person's interest.

### 2) *Work with senior centre staff*

Many senior centre staff are not familiar with communicating or working with persons with disabilities. Help the centre to accommodate the person. Develop a good working relationship with centre staff through ongoing communication.

### 3) *Look for social interaction opportunities*

Encourage engagement in social interaction. Seek out programs and activities that involve social interaction with others.

### 4) *Encourage ongoing participation for relationship building*

It may take a while to build meaningful relationships with others. Ongoing and regular contact with others in a senior centre increases the chances of developing meaningful relationships.

### 5) *Encourage meaningful engagement, while fostering independence*

There is a fine line between providing necessary assistance for meaningful engagement and nurturing independence. Facilitate independence while providing necessary support for meaningful engagement.



### 6) *Be part of the community*

Help older adults with disabilities to be part of the community at the senior centre. Encourage the person to volunteer and engage in events, whenever possible.

### 7) *Support the entire group*

Individual supports may stigmatize the person who receives the assistance. Consider providing support to the whole group during a program.

### 8) *Be creative*

There might be situations when older adults with disabilities cannot fully participate in a program or activity. Create alternative ways that the person can participate to their best capacity.

### 9) *Be mindful of the centre's code of conduct*

Many senior centres have a zero-tolerance policy against verbal or physical violence. To ensure success, work with the person and the centre to understand how certain behaviour may be interpreted as violation of the code of conduct.

### 10) *Invite the person's friends or family*

Invite the person's friends or family, who are also older adults, to join them at a senior centre. This may make it easier for the person to adjust to the new environment.