



## 4 Strategies To Engage More Residents In Your Exercise Program

If your community is like most, you have group exercise classes on the weekly calendar along with a fitness center which offers a lot of options to residents. Yet the same core group of residents are your primary participants. Their feedback is likely what has shaped the classes that make it on your schedule and they may have had a strong impact on the most recent equipment purchases for the fitness center. So how do you reach non-participants? They aren't vocal about exercise and they may not be as internally motivated to participate. Read on to discover a few strategies that help NIFS achieve 75%+ participation rates at the communities we serve.

**Use data:** Tracking individual-level participation in all of your fitness offerings can help you identify who exactly is coming; you can dial into those members to provide support for their goals. That data will also identify who isn't participating so you can develop outreach efforts for those currently unengaged residents. By tailoring offerings and providing a personal invitation, you're more likely to see non-active residents start to participate in your program.

**Provide variety:** Your residents come to the community from all walks of life and it's safe to assume that you need variety in programming to span their varying interests. Group fitness classes and an exercise challenge a couple of times a year likely won't pull in the masses. Consider individualized services like tailored exercise programs and fitness evaluations, broader wellness-based programming, and recreational activities to reach diverse interests.

**Keep it fresh:** Continually reinvent resident favorites or don't be afraid to try something new to keep residents inspired. Some of your biggest programming successes are those initiatives that create a buzz and expose residents to new experiences. Even the most successful programs can lose their luster after a few years so keep your eyes open for opportunities to retire or reinvent a resident favorite into something new.

**Promote uniquely:** Internal TV channels and community newsletters and calendars are all hallmark avenues of promoting upcoming programs and events. Consider the impact your community can make if residents are encouraged to attend your next big event through a verbal invitation via the serving staff in the dining room, by the bus driver on their next outing, or through other departments at the community. You may be able to reach more people who don't normally tune-in to fitness promotions by networking information amongst community personnel who can help you champion events. We've also seen big success with individual postcard invitations, with personal notes, tied to specific events.

The steps above are a part of our systematic approach to supporting a comprehensive programming in senior living communities and they require our staff to regularly evaluate their successes and challenges for continuous improvement. The needs and interests of residents change over time, and using data wisely, developing strategic programming calendars and maintaining a pulse for what is trending in senior fitness can help your community engage more residents in your healthy programming.

**To find out more about bringing NIFS staff onsite to manage your fitness center, visit our website [wellness.nifs.org](https://wellness.nifs.org) or contact Emily Davenport at 317-274-3432 or by email.**

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