

Chicago Grantee Reaches Older Veterans with Virtual WRAP®

As one of ACL's [Chronic Disease Self-Management Education \(CDSME\)](#) grantees, the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) provides older adults and adults with disabilities with education and tools to help them better manage conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, chronic pain, and depression.

Its three-grant project that began in 2018 focuses on peer support using the [Wellness Recovery Action Plan \(WRAP®\)](#), a wellness and recovery approach that helps people to: 1) decrease/prevent troubling feelings and behaviors; 2) increase empowerment; 3) improve quality of life; and 4) achieve life goals.

As just one example of working toward its goals, the grantee partnered with [National Women Veterans United](#) to offer WRAP® in the greater Chicagoland community. A Zoom class in July was attended by 10 older women veterans who found connecting with peers and creating personal plans to be enjoyable and effective.

In Their Words

“I learned to pay more attention to my health and well-being.”

“Balance and support. I don't have to be alone or do it alone.”

“How important it is to look at my lifestyle issues and make some changes.”

“It was at a much-needed time (pandemic) in life where comradery enhanced the WRAP experience.”

“Education for me is finding out what it takes for me to stay calm and balanced.”

“The time spent sharing and listening to what others do to be well.”

“I liked the fact that I felt that I was not alone with my situations.”

Participants also identified challenges they were able to address using their WRAP®, including managing anxiety, difficulty sleeping, COVID-19 social restrictions, and unhealthy eating.

Responding to this feedback, to help older adults with increased isolation and stress due to the pandemic, UIC added a Zoom “refresher” session as a touchpoint about a month after classes. Participants shared during a refresher that the WRAP® is helping them to get out and discover things to do, like connecting with others and walking at the park.