

## Functional Levels



**Figure 4.** ICAA's functional levels

### Athlete

*Fitness:* Exercises or participates in sports activity almost every day or works at a physically demanding job.

*Goals:* Maintain or improve fitness level.

*Needs:* Exercise that builds physical reserves and provides conditioning for improving performance in competition or in strenuous vocational and/or recreational activities.

*Program:* General conditioning in muscular strength, endurance and flexibility; agility; cardiovascular endurance. Sport- or activity-specific conditioning.

### Active now

*Fitness:* Exercises at least twice a week and engages in physical activity most days of the week.

*Goals:* Maintain or improve fitness level; manage weight; improve conditions such as osteoarthritis or diabetes.

*Needs:* Exercise that helps build physical reserves and maintains the level of fitness to live an active, independent lifestyle.

*Program:* Concentrate on muscular strength, endurance and flexibility, joint range of motion, balance, co-

ordination, agility and cardiovascular endurance.

### Getting started

*Fitness:* Engages in physical activity at least three days a week.

*Goals:* To live independently; manage weight; improve conditions such as arthritis or diabetes.

*Needs:* Exercise that helps improve physical function and develops fitness and health reserves.

*Program:* Focus on increasing and building reserve in muscular strength, endurance and flexibility, joint range of motion, balance, coordination and cardiovascular endurance.

### Needs a little help

*Fitness:* Engages in physical activity three or fewer times per week. May have medical conditions and movement limitations.

*Goals:* Regain strength and balance; improve function and mobility; improve medical conditions.

*Needs:* Movement that helps maintain or improve physical function for basic self-care (Basic Activities of Daily Living), such as strength, range of motion, balance and coordination.

*Program:* Improve hand strength and agility, arm strength, shoulder and hip

range of motion, quadriceps and shin muscles strength, and ankle strength and range of motion.

### Needs ongoing assistance

*Fitness:* Does not engage in physical activity.

*Goals:* Improve ability to perform activities of daily living.

*Needs:* Movement that helps maintain or improve physical function for basic self-care, including self-feeding, bathing, dressing, toileting, transferring and walking.

*Program:* Concentrate on activities that improve strength, range of motion, balance and coordination.

Physical activity = daily activities that increase energy expenditure, such as gardening, walking, raking leaves, playing golf, housework, washing car.

Exercise = physical activity with the intention of developing physical fitness, such as strength, cardiovascular or flexibility exercise, challenging walking, pre- or post-rehabilitation exercise.

*Adapted from the work of Waneen Spirduso, EdD (Physical Dimensions of Aging, Human Kinetics).*