

SHIP Worksite Wellness Intervention

Progress report: July 2010 – January 2011

Prepared for CJRR Public Health as part of their SHIP evaluation

Cottonwood-Jackson-Redwood-Renville (CJRR) Public Health is working with worksites in their service area on the SHIP Worksite Wellness Initiative that focuses on comprehensive employee wellness to promote healthy weight and healthy behaviors in the workplace. The project is part of a larger effort by CJRR Public Health, which is funded by the Minnesota Department of Health's Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP).

This report provides a snapshot of progress to-date (July 2010 through January 2011). It was prepared by Wilder Research. CJRR Public Health compiled existing data and collected original data as a part of this evaluation, using tools developed by Wilder Research.

Reach

CJRR's service area includes a workforce of approximately 30,741 throughout Cottonwood, Jackson, Redwood, and Renville Counties. CJRR Public health is working with two worksites in these counties. In total, these worksites have 273 employees, which is 0.9 percent of the total workforce.

Worksite	Employees
Renville County	221
Heron Lake Bio Energy	52

All five of the MN West Community and Technical College Campuses are also participating as a part of this intervention. They are working toward creating policies and environments that support tobacco-free campuses.

The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota (BCBS) Center for Prevention is partnering with CJRR SHIP to create a culture of health within the worksite for employees and their families.

Activities

From July through January 2011, SHIP staff worked with each worksite to complete a comprehensive evaluation of current workplace wellness policies and practices as well as to survey employees to gauge interest. SHIP staff are currently working with worksites to develop individualized action plans.

Various activities have occurred through this intervention. These include:

- BCBS and employee wellness councils at each site have reviewed current policies related to tobacco-free grounds, healthy vending options, and increasing physical activity during the workday
- Communication tools were created to support and promote healthy nutrition, increased physical activity, tobacco cessation, and overall health through key messages in newsletters, emails, and a monthly health observances calendar
- Renville County has reviewed plans to create a worksite garden. The County hopes to improve and expand their worksite garden through the support of their employee wellness council
- All MN West Community and Technical College Campuses are working to create policy changes to become tobacco-free campuses

The Worksite Wellness Health Behavior and Interest Survey was also conducted with 119 Renville County employees. Results show that 29 percent of respondents would eat fruit 5 or more days per week if it were available free at staff meetings or in break areas. One-fifth of respondents would use a 15-minute paid break for activity nearly everyday if there were a convenient place to be active. Information gathered from the survey will provide insight on current and future worksite wellness initiatives based on the needs and interests of Renville County employees.

Policy, systems, and environments

One of the goals of SHIP is to change policies, systems, and environments to make the healthy choice the easy choice and to ensure sustainability beyond the end of any one particular program or funding stream. In the case of the Worksite Wellness Intervention, it means specifically changing policies, systems, and environments in the workplace to create opportunities for healthy behaviors among employees.

Environmental changes that have resulted from the SHIP initiative include increased awareness of healthy snacks in vending machines by labeling the healthier options, as well as the creation of logos and vision statements in order to increase awareness of the availability of walking routes and maps for Renville County employees. SHIP staff have also worked to increase awareness of tobacco cessation supports available at each worksite. At the Renville County site, these efforts have resulted in employees walking in

the hallways on breaks for physical activity. The indoor walking route maps created through the Worksite Wellness Initiative have been credited with this increase in activity among employees. Policy changes related to tobacco-free grounds, healthy vending options, and opportunities for physical activity are also being sought at each worksite.

Impact

Spending an average of one-third of each day in the workplace, employee health behaviors can be strongly influenced by worksite policy and practices. Increased healthy behaviors are linked to lower rates of employee absenteeism, higher job performance, and lower health care costs. A 2010 study found that for each dollar spent on wellness programs, costs related to absenteeism fall by \$2.73 (Katherine Baicker et al. (2010) “Workplace Wellness Programs Can Generate Savings” *Health Affairs*).

CJRR SHIP staff have accomplished many of their projected short-term outcomes, including increasing awareness of worksite wellness best practices at each site and increasing worksite/employer awareness of the current state of their organization. Employees at each site now have an increased awareness of healthy behaviors through activities such as the labeling of healthy vending options. Employees are now utilizing some of the resources available at their worksite to support healthy weight and healthy behaviors, such as indoor walking routes at Renville County. This increase in awareness may lead to further implementation of environmental and policy changes to support healthy behaviors among employees, which may ultimately result in a healthier workforce in Cottonwood, Jackson, Redwood, and Renville Counties.



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451 Lexington Parkway North
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104
651-280-2700

www.wilderresearch.org



For more information

For more information about this report, contact
Nicole MartinRogers at Wilder Research, 651-280-
2682

or

Or Bonnie Frederickson at Cottonwood-Jackson
Community Health Service, 507-831-1987

Author: Natalie Alizaga
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