

Statewide Vision and Strategy for Improving the Health of North Dakotans

Worksite Wellness Initiative: Highlights

OVERALL GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

Improve the health status of employees, employers and families in North Dakota by creating worksites that encourage and support healthy behaviors.

- Increase the number of North Dakota worksites that have comprehensive wellness programs.
- Increase the number of employees that participate in wellness activities.
- Demonstrate the impact of comprehensive worksite wellness programs on the health status and health practices of participating employees and their families.

DESCRIPTION OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

Worksites in North Dakota provide a unique opportunity to promote wellness:

- More than 428,831 (67%) of North Dakotans older than 16 are in the workforce. (Job Service North Dakota 2006)
- More than 64 percent of North Dakota adults age 65 and younger have employer-based group health insurance. (Kaiser Family Foundation 2005)
- 80% of North Dakota businesses believe in the benefits of worksite wellness, yet fewer than 10% are implementing worksite wellness programs. (Winkelman 2001)

North Dakota has several specific strengths to build on:

- Existing worksite wellness programs that have already been launched by North Dakota employers and are currently underway
- An existing network of worksite wellness consultants that has been trained by Healthy North Dakota
- Support for worksite wellness programs by BlueCross/BlueShield (BC/BS) of North Dakota and the North Dakota Public Employees Retirement System (NDPERS)
- A study of worksites and their interest in wellness-related activities

North Dakota also faces a unique challenge in implementing worksite wellness:

- Ninety-six percent of businesses in the state are classified as small businesses.
- The average size business in the state has 13 employees.
- The majority of national research on the effectiveness of worksite wellness has been conducted in large businesses.

RATIONALE

- National research and best practices on worksite wellness demonstrate its effectiveness in improving health and generating return on investment.
- Achieving these results from worksite wellness requires a comprehensive approach.

- A meta-analysis of comprehensive worksite wellness programs demonstrates their effectiveness:
 - 26.8% decrease in sick leave absenteeism
 - 26.1% decrease in health care costs
 - 32.0% decrease in worker's compensation disability management claims
 - A benefit/cost ratio of 5.81.

SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED APPROACH

Phase 2 efforts (July 2007 through December of 2008) will focus on implementing the following four strategies:

Strategy 1: Establish an inventory of current worksite wellness efforts in North Dakota

- Partner with the North Dakota Chamber to obtain insights from business owners on current status and impressions of worksite wellness by conducting brief qualitative assessments during local chamber meetings
- Identify champions to promote worksite wellness in new sites
- Demonstrate the effectiveness of comprehensive worksite wellness and develop a business case for advocating the expansion of comprehensive worksite wellness to additional employers/sites
- Monitor the effectiveness of Hedahls' Wellness Program (Hedahls is a North Dakota-based auto parts company)
- Create effective approaches to increasing the visibility of successful worksite wellness programs

Strategy 2: Develop a comprehensive toolbox for how to implement worksite wellness

- Utilize the successful practices and the business case (including models/frameworks, methods, tools and evaluation methods) to design a toolbox North Dakota employers can use to implement/improve comprehensive worksite wellness programs
- Create viable models for small businesses
 - Design a community-based approach to worksite wellness
 - Develop turnkey program components that can be cost-effectively implemented by small businesses

Strategy 3: Develop and implement an approach to dissemination and effective use of methods and tools

- Partner with influential organizations to expand the number of worksite wellness programs in North Dakota
- Design and implement the BlueCross/BlueShield Wellness Incentive Plan to encourage employer participation (BlueCross/BlueShield provides health insurance for 70% of North Dakota's insured population)

Strategy 4: Implement on-going support to ensure sustainability

- Create a web-portal for sharing worksite wellness resources
- Create user groups for on-going support
- Strengthen the worksite wellness consulting network

Phase 3 efforts (beginning in January 2009) will focus on:

- Expanding successful worksite wellness programs to additional sites
- Continuing to develop resources and tools to ensure sustainability
- Continuing to build a statewide infrastructure of support to ensure sustainability

WORKSITE WELLNESS CORE TEAM MEMBERS

- Dick Hedahl, President, Hedahls, Inc., Bismarck, North Dakota (Team Leader)
- Melissa Olson, Healthy North Dakota, Bismarck, North Dakota (Convener)
- Loreeta Canton, Public Information Officer, North Dakota Department of Health, Bismarck, North Dakota
- Sparb Collins, Executive Director, North Dakota Public Employees Retirement System, Bismarck, North Dakota
- Gary Liguori, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Health, Nutrition and Exercise Science, North Dakota State University, Fargo, North Dakota
- Guy Moos, President, Baker Boy Foods, Dickinson, North Dakota
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