

Employee Wellness Plan
CY 2007
Philadelphia VA Medical Center

Employee Wellness

Background

In 2006, Occupational Health was asked to join the Employee Wellness Advisory Council organized through the VA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention as the Philadelphia VAMC representative. In essence, this was an opportunity to participate in a “grass roots” effort of VA-wide Employee Wellness program development. The Wellness Advisory Group has been charged with the following:

- Develop specific Employee Wellness projects
- Explore tracking (what and how to measure outcomes)
- Develop a “start up” kit and “how to” tips for projects
- Develop a Wellness Program Guide
- Review nominations for the prevention (wellness) team awards
- Review materials to determine best practices, efficacy and feasibility
- Gain clarity on rules and regulations regarding employee wellness programs within the VA; and
- Determine an effective way to share wellness materials and program ideas.

Locally, we have set up an Employee Wellness focus group and have developed the following plan for FY 2007 and beyond.

Why Commit Resources to Employee Wellness?

For over ten years, the Office of Personnel Management has supported the concept of providing Physical Fitness Programs for federal employees. Health and productivity are related. More die from obesity related medical complications than from accidents, cancers and AIDS combined. A Body Mass Index (BMI) of greater than 30 yields a high probability of weight related illness at sometime in the life span and 66% of all Americans are overweight (i.e. have a BMI of greater than 30).

The National Health care expenditure is currently 32% of the nation’s gross national product, or nearly \$4,700 per person per year. Due to high healthcare costs, many organizations are keenly interested in the financial savings that wellness programs can provide. Over two-thirds of all companies surveyed have initiated wellness and safety programs to help curb escalating costs. Recent scientific research reveals significant cost savings can be achieved by reducing health risks. Other benefits include increased productivity, job satisfaction and decreased lost time from sickness (Brown, N. B. 2005).

Added incentives include the national commitment to encourage all Americans to adopt healthier lifestyle choices (the Presidents Council on Fitness), the SHARE initiative (the requirement that work related incidents in the VA system be decreased by 5%), components of the AFGE union contract related to health promotion (Article 28, Section 21) and the drive to become an “employer of choice” and/or a “magnet hospital” to facilitate recruiting and retention efforts. Plans are underway to include questions specific

to Employee Wellness Programs in the annual Employee Satisfaction Survey. Finally, it is simply the right thing to do.

A recent survey of VA Medical Centers across the country reveals many are already offering comprehensive Employee Wellness programs. Components of these programs include various health screenings, educational and health conscious incentive programs, Weight Watcher's at Work, Onsite Fitness Centers, onsite exercise programs and smoking cessation programs. The Employee MOVE program is in development and a "How To" manual will be available at the Preventive Health Conference in July 2006.

Proposal

The Wellness Focus Group has developed a year long Employee Wellness Initiative. This Initiative will have the following components:

- 1) Free cholesterol screening for non Title 38 employees* two months a year (February, September) Employee Wellness "Kick Off" days January 23,24th
- 2) Free Fasting Blood Sugar screenings two months a year (March, November)
- 3) PSA screening for men; TSH Screening for women (July)
- 4) Blood Pressure Screening all year
- 5) EKGs (March)
- 6) Depression screening one month a year (April)
- 7) Skin cancer screening one clinic each year (May)
- 8) Foot screening one clinic each year (April)
- 9) Exercise programs (walking club, lunch time aerobics)
- 10) Skin screening clinic (if possible)
- 11) Foot Screening clinic (if possible)
- 12) Blood borne Pathogen screening (Hepatitis C, B and HIV)(June)
- 13) Mammograms all year (sign up once a year)(May)
- 14) Educational programs once a month
- 15) Health Appraisals once a year (December)
- 16) Employee MOVE program all year
- 17) Employee Health tip of the month all year
- 18) Smoking Cessation Programs
- 19) Stress Reduction Programs

*** Title 38 employees are included in the Annual Health Assessment Program. There will be no changes to that program in CY 2007.**

Proposed Employee Wellness Calendar

January: Employee Wellness Kick Off Day (Distribution of Diet Diaries/Exercise Logs)

Educational Program: “Training for a Marathon” (Jimmie McKnight and Bev Levy to present)

Cholesterol Screening

Monthly Weigh Ins

Employee Flu shots

Health tip subject: (More people die each year from obesity related illnesses than from accidents, cancers and AIDS combined. Get moving and take off that extra weight!)

February: “How to Train for a Marathon: Diet and Exercise Tips”

Free Fasting Cholesterols

Monthly Weigh Ins

Health Tip Subject: (Fact re: controlling Cholesterol)

March: “Diabetes: Facts and Fables”

Free Fasting Blood Sugars

Employee MOVE Kick OFF?

Monthly Weigh Ins

Health Tip Subject: “Painless Ways to Cut Calories”

April: Walking Club Kick off day “Heart Disease in Women”

Health Club Information Fair

Depression Screening or Type Screening; Personality Test

Monthly Weigh Ins

Health Tip Subject: (Relationship between Depression and Obesity or Stress Management Program)

May: Mammogram sign up Month

Sun Safety Lecture

Skin Cancer Screening

Monthly Weigh Ins

Health Tip Subject: (Skin Cancer Facts, Breast Cancer Facts)

June: Blood Born Pathogen Testing/ Men’s Health Month

HIV testing, Hep B and Hep C

PSA screening

Monthly Weigh Ins

Health Tip Subject: (HIV related Fact or Prostate Cancer Fact)

July: “Fun and Leisure Month” (Employees share their leisure time activities!)
HIV testing, Hep B and Hep C
PSA screening
Monthly Weigh Ins
Health tip Subject: (Correlation between pleasurable hobbies and Mental Health)

August: “Adult Immunization Lecture” “Childhood Immunizations”
Immunization Offering: Pneumovax (over 55 only) Hepatitis A, MMR, Tetanus,
Varicella (Carol Sausman to present?)
Screening: Hep A, Childhood disease titers
Monthly Weight Ins
Health Tip Subject: (Immunization Fact or two)

September: “Nutritional Assessment” or “You are What you Eat”
Free Cholesterol Screenings
Monthly Weigh Ins
Health Tip Subject: (Healthy Eating Tip)
Employee Flu Shots

October: “Sports Medicine for the Non-Clinician” (Sally Foster Chang to present)
Fasting Blood Sugars
Monthly Weigh Ins
Health Tip Subject: (Exercise Tip)
Employee Flu Shots

November: “Guide to Foot Health”
Foot Screening Clinic
Monthly Weigh Ins
Health Tip Subject: (Foot Health)
Employee Flu Shots

December: “The Truth about Low Carbohydrate Diets”
Health Risk Appraisals if available
Monthly Weigh Ins
Health Tip Subject: “Tips for Healthy Holiday Eating” OR “Holiday Mood –
Don’t let the Holiday Get you Down”
Employee Flu Shots

Employee MOVE Program, Walking Club, Aerobic and Stress reduction Classes will be ongoing

Awards Program

Health Hero of the Year
Incredible Shrinking Man/Woman Award
Spirit Award
T-Shirts/ Water Bottles/Pedometers/ Hats

Employee Participation

The federal personnel system gives employees considerable flexibility in scheduling hours of work and taking time off for routine medical examinations and preventive screenings. The agency should review policies and make maximum use of existing schedules to encourage employees to take advantage of preventive health services. The following are some examples of the work and leave flexibilities available to federal employees:

- 1) Alternative Work Schedules
- 2) Annual Leave
- 3) Sick leave
- 4) Excused Absence*
- 5) Advanced Leave
- 6) Family Medical Leave
- 7) Leave Sharing

*The agency may grant a limited amount of excused absence, at the supervisor's discretion, for employees to participate in agency sponsored health activities, such as health fairs, mobile screenings, smoking cessation and stress reduction classes.

Staffing:

The Employee Wellness Work Group was established in June 2006. Each member of this group will be assigned a month. During the assigned month, the group member will handle arranging the speaker, room assignments and publicity. Occupational Health will organize and run the Employee Blood work screening activities. If funds are approved for a staff member to run the Employee MOVE program, this program will be offered for one calendar year. If successful, we may consider continuation.

Medical Media Needs:

- 1) Monthly announcements including “Employee Wellness Tip of the Month” in Pulse, Family Focus and on Overhead Video Screens (approved by Judi Cheary)
- 2) Monthly Flyers/Posters announcing the Employee Wellness Lecture and Available Screenings
- 3) Initial Wellness Package describing services plus a Diet and Exercise Diary
- 4) Employee Wellness Participant Card listing benefits (Cards will allow employees to check out pedometers for Walking Club)

Costs:

Speaker Honoraria:	\$1000.00*
(Many Speakers can be from in house at no increased cost)	
Health Risk Appraisals	\$0000.00 (used online free source)
Cholesterol Screenings @ \$5.00 per employee*	\$1561.00
FBS@ \$.16 per employee*	\$ 49.95
Hgb A1C @ \$2.00 per employee*	\$ 160.00
PSA@ \$5.00 per employee*	\$1561.00
HIV@ \$5.00 per employee*	\$1561.00
Mammograms@ \$81.00 per employee*	\$12636.00
Skin Cancer Screening Clinic (Cost neutral if staff volunteer)	
Foot Health Screening Clinic (Cost neutral if staff volunteer)	
Partial FTE to provide Employee MOVE sessions (4-6 hrs/week X \$40.00/hr for 50 wks a year):+	\$12000.00
Advertising (Medical Media)	\$1000.00
Awards	\$1000.00
Pedometers	\$ 250.00 (property of VA)
Total	\$32,778.95

(* Costs are based on an expected participation rate of 20% - this rate is an estimate based on the number of employees offered Title 38 screening vs. those that actually participate. Money for programs comes from money appropriated for Occupational Health Services, Employee Assistance, Women’s Health and EEO programs.”

Fund Raising

VA Medical Centers throughout the country have relied on a variety of funding sources for Employee Wellness activities. Some are fully funded by the Medical Center, others require employee co-pays. Employee Associations have provided some funds. There are even hospitals who have hired a full time Wellness Coordinator who, among other things, spearheads fundraising activities specifically for Veteran and Employee Wellness programs.

The Wellness Focus Group at the Philadelphia VAMC has suggested we charge employees an annual fee of \$5.00 for participation if indicated. This is a nominal fee which will merely defray our overall costs. However, it might motivate individual employees to take part in Wellness activities throughout the year (this has not been done!)

Conclusions

Though our results may not mirror those of other VA Medical Centers, The Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System realized significant cost savings after initiating a comprehensive Employee Wellness program. Five years after implementing the program, OWCP expenditures were the lowest in 20 years (a \$1.0 million dollar reduction), and COP and lost time reduced significantly. In addition, there was a measurable reduction in sick leave utilization. Work place morale improved, the facility was in compliance with AFGE and Federal Directives for Workplace Wellness, an employee driven process action team took over the planning of future health screenings, consumer satisfaction with Occupational Health Services improved as Occupational Health began to be viewed as a workplace asset. Central Arkansas became a safer and healthier place to work.

Added value outcomes included:

- 1) earlier diagnosis of 6 cases of prostate cancer; and
- 2) Clinical parameter improvements (Blood Pressure, Triglycerides and glucose management).

As a health care facility offering superior care to our veterans, the value of healthier employees is immeasurable. Our employees will work better, faster and friendlier if they feel good. A fit and mentally alert staff will not only get the job done better and cheaper, but they will serve as healthy role models for our veteran population.