“We changed our diet[s] permanently!”

A Qualitative Evaluation of the *Maryland Works* Worksite Wellness Program

Natasha A. Brown, MPH, PHASE Intern

Ann Walsh, MHS, CHES, PHASE Preceptor

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Presentation Outline

- Worksite Wellness & *Maryland Works*
- Targeted Worksites & Wellness Programs
- Methods
- Results
- Limitations
- Conclusions & Discussion
Why worksite wellness?

- Obesity impact
  - 61% of Maryland adults are overweight or obese
  - $1.5 of medical expenses in the state are obesity related

- Worksites may be a venue for reaching a large segment of Maryland adults

- Surgeon General’s report calls for multilevel approach
  - Social Ecological Model
  - Workplace is a target site
What is *Maryland Works*?

- CDC & Maryland Nutrition and Physical Activity Programs to Prevent Obesity and Other Chronic Diseases (NPAO)

- Grant for worksite interventions to prevent obesity and chronic disease

- Local health departments (LHDs) use evidence- and practice-based programs
  - Healthy eating
  - Physical activity

- Received by 7 LHDs in Maryland
  - 2 worksites per county
Washington & Kent County Worksites

- **Washington County Health Department (WCHD)**
  - 321 employees
  - 80% primarily sit or stand
  - 32% participate in physical activity or consume fruits 2-3 times/week

- **Hub Labels**
  - 136 employees
  - 50% primarily sit or stand
  - 26% participate in physical activity or consume fruits 2-3 times/week

- **Kent County Health Department (KCHD)**
  - 114 employees
  - 78% do not engage in regular physical activity
  - 61% do not eat 5 servings/day of fruits and vegetables

- **Kent County Public Schools (KCPS)**
  - 380 employees
  - 64% do not engage in regular physical activity
  - 87% do not eat 5 servings/day of fruits and vegetables
Active for Life & Take Action!

- Active for Life
  - 10 weeks
  - Stages of change model
  - Focuses on physical activity

- Take Action!
  - 10 weeks
  - Stages of change model
  - Focuses on physical activity AND fruit & vegetable intake
  - Incentive-based
Methods
Approach

- Qualitative approach to improve understanding of the “why” and “how” of the programs’ impact

- Employees asked to complete open-ended questionnaires
  - Electronic or handwritten responses accepted
Data Sources

- Participating employees
  - Tracking fruit & vegetable intake
  - Eating patterns (i.e. vending machines, restaurants)
  - Individual goal achievement
  - Program completion

- Team leaders
  - Challenges & benefits
  - Suggestions for improvement
Data Sources (cont.)

- Nonparticipating employees
  - Decision to not participate
  - Influence of participating coworkers
  - Contemplation of future participation

- Key informants
  - Observation of improved team-building skills, employee morale
  - Appropriateness of program for employees
  - Goodness of fit between program and existing company policies
Results
### Questionnaire Respondents

- **42 Respondents**

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General Program Feedback

- Most enjoyable aspect of the program
  - Increased awareness of FV intake & healthy food options
  - Appreciation
    • Structured program
    • Incentives
    • Management’s interest in employee health

- Least enjoyable aspects of the program
  - “Paperwork” required to track FV intake
  - Duration of the program
  - Lack of information regarding some program components

“It was fun to see people compete with each other. Some employees who never ate fruits and vegetables started as a result of this program. I liked that the principals supported it.”
Tracking Fruit & Vegetable Servings

- Perceived as a useful activity
  - Allowed employees to see their progress
  - Increased awareness of dietary practices
  - Provided motivation
    - Teamwork
    - Friendly competition

- But...
  - Time requirements
  - Sometimes forgot to track FV servings
  - Confusion in determining serving sizes & amounts
Goal Promoters & Inhibitors

- **Promoters**
  - Teamwork & competition
  - Informational handouts
  - Daily FV tracking

- **Inhibitors**
  - Personal sickness
  - Time of year
  - Work responsibilities
  - Previous dietary habits

“It made me really aware of what I was eating, and although I didn't reach my goal I still did better than when I started. So that's good right?”
The Team Leader Experience

- **Enjoyable aspects**
  - Able to meet & interact with other employees

- **Challenges**
  - Additional responsibility
  - Keeping participants motivated
  - Making contact to collect forms
KCHD & Hub Labels Key Informant Perspectives

- Positively influenced team-building skills and morale
- Complemented existing wellness policies

“Employees like to work at a company they perceive as progressive. It increases the pride they have in their job and their company... Employees enjoy having activities that break the monotony that work can be and they feel good about completing a challenge that is good for their health.”
Limitations

- Collecting stories long distance and via questionnaires
  - Journaling, focus groups, and/or interviews may yield better results

- Administrative decisions and changes in Washington County

- Lack of quality data from nonparticipating employees
Conclusions

- Behavior change through stages of change model is not always progressive

- Future efforts may be more effective if focused is placed beyond individual behavior change
  - Wellness policy development, implementation and maintenance
  - Structural changes to promote healthy eating and physical activity
Discussion

- *Take Action!* was well-received by and beneficial to participating employees at KCPS and KCHD

“It was good to see what I was eating. I have started making changes when I go shopping, and my daughters started eating more vegetables at dinner.”

- Potential to reach other individuals in the community

“I think you should offer this program to the guys at Brambles. They are really overweight and need some advice on eating better! It would be neat if this was a county competition. Just a thought...”
References


Thank You