

WELLNESS AT WORK

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Purpose: The purpose of this project is to evaluate the efficacy of peer-driven workplace wellness activities and programming focused on holistic wellness through experiential learning.

Problem Identification: It is well-accepted by clinical professionals that personal, emotional and physical wellness affects quality of service delivery. Previously, Bergen's Promise promoted employee wellness via psycho-educational, didactic methods. These efforts produced short-term effects with limited participation; a paradigm shift was needed to address a gap in employee engagement and to promote carry-over of these strategies to youth and families.

Intervention: This paradigm shift involved an adjustment of organizational social norms initiated by the formation of a voluntary peer-led Wellness Committee. The committee utilized a variety of modalities, including a democratic peer process, competition and rewards, tactile and visual experiences, and multi-media communication methods to engage peers in wellness activities. The Wellness Committee used the results of an employee wellness needs assessment to drive the democratic development of a wide variety of wellness initiatives. This QI project explores the effectiveness of several specific activities developed in this manner, including a Wellness Whiteboard, interactive water and germ informational campaigns, fiscal fitness activities, and peer-led chair exercises and yoga.

Data: A retrospective cross-sectional survey was distributed by the Wellness Committee to measure the impact of peer-led instruction of chair exercises. Survey results indicated that the majority of employees do chair exercises/stretching at least occasionally. One-third of employees reported that they were more aware of the practice, and 15% were more likely to engage in the behavior. Individual pre- and post-test surveys of employee knowledge were collected to assess interactive finance and germ informational campaigns. Data were analyzed via unpaired t-tests. Results demonstrated a significant increase in knowledge about ways to prevent electricity and water waste, and increased knowledge of highly bacterial areas of vehicle interiors. A trend analysis of water consumption indicated a significant increase in average gallons of water consumed per employee per month during the education campaign. Consumption rates leveled off when the campaign ended, but remained improved from baseline. The impact of the Wellness Whiteboard, a board used to communicate themed health information selected by the committee, was assessed by tracking participation level and the collection of peer qualitative feedback. The Wellness Committee gathered comments from staff regarding their feelings about the Wellness Whiteboard, the vast majority of which were positive.

Conclusions: The results of this project demonstrate that the paradigm shift to experiential learning resulted in increased employee knowledge and engagement, and contributed to change in Agency practices. For example, an automobile cleanliness policy for Agency vehicles resulted from increased awareness of the germ concentrations in vehicle interiors. An invitation to participate in the Wellness Committee is now a part of Employee Orientation. Bergen's Promise will continue to evaluate the efficacy of peer-driven workplace wellness activities and programming; the current project provides a well-defined baseline that will improve the validity of future efforts. Future projects will evaluate the relationship between workload and participation in healthful activities, and whether or not internal employee wellness initiatives have a measureable impact on the provision of services to youth and families.