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Project: Evaluation of Worksite Wellness Assessment & Guide

ABSTRACT

Each year more than \$2.2 trillion is spent on health care in the United States - about half of this is spent on the treatment of chronic disease. Not only are the expenses associated with chronic diseases great, but also the lives lost as chronic conditions account for nearly 70% of American deaths each year. What is truly distressing about these statistics is the fact that in most cases, chronic conditions can be prevented by simply modifying behaviors.

Because employers are incurring around one-third of total health care spending in the United States, they have significant stake in improving the health of the employee population – which is more than 139 million individuals nationwide. Worksite wellness programs can not only improve the health of the employers' bottom-line by saving on direct and indirect costs associated with poor employee health, but also the overall health and wellbeing of their employees. Successful worksite wellness programs can address the risk factors that lead to chronic disease, such as; inactivity, poor nutrition, smoking and excessive alcohol consumption. Because businesses tend to prioritize their bottom line, it is important to be aware that for every \$1 per employee spent on wellness programs, an average return of \$3.48 can be realized.

Acknowledging the potential to encourage meaningful behavior change in this arena, Building a Healthier Chicago created the Healthy Worksite Initiative (HWI). The goal of the HWI is to “support Chicagoland employers in improving the health and productivity of their employees and families.” The HWI has three components: the Worksite Wellness Assessment, the Worksite Wellness Guide and a recognition component for all those employers who wish to be recognized and rewarded for their successful practices.

The purpose of this project was to provide a general evaluation of the Assessment and the Guide to determine how successful the tools were in supporting employer worksite wellness efforts and what could be done to better engage and encourage them. By piloting the Assessment and administering a post-survey, the Worksite Wellness Committee was able to determine problem areas and correct and modify the Assessment for launch on March 12. In addition, a post-survey was developed for the final Assessment that gauged employers' feelings about the Assessment and how effective it was in meeting the goals of set forth by the Steering Committee.