Building a Culture of Health in the Workplace: Promising Strategies and Innovative Practices

Cristin Cooney, MS, M.Ed, MCHES, CTTS, Certified Wellcoach
Manager
Employee Wellness
Atlantic Health System
Atlantic Health System is invested in the health of our employees.

**Provider**
To improve health and coordination of care

**Payer**
To model responsible health care and reduce health care costs

**Employer**
To support our vision with our community and role model healthy behaviors
AHS Employee Wellness Program

Supports AHS vision and values of engagement, empowerment, responsible, quality health care, and improved well-being.
We know behavior impacts health status.
But how do we foster a culture of wellness in the workplace?
Health care is changing….

This shift inherently increases the importance of outcomes-based wellness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Care Shift</th>
<th>Fee for Service</th>
<th>Value-Based Care</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Active, coordinated, sustainable wellness/prevention and managed treatment</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wellness Program Shift</th>
<th>Participation Only</th>
<th>Outcomes-Based</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation/activity focused</td>
<td>Action focused</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little continuity/coordination</td>
<td>Coordination of care and ongoing engagement in programs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to measure</td>
<td>Produces measurable data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same (healthy) employees engage in programming</td>
<td>Reaches broad population</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How do you define wellness?
Connection is linked to wellness

Feel Disconnected
- Stress
- Loneliness
- Frustration
- Fatigue
- Defeat

Difficult to maintain wellness
- Difficulty sleeping
- Lack of motivation to exercise and eat well
- Dissatisfied with work/relationships
- Emotional distress

Affects work
- Productivity
- Stress related illness
- Low morale and engagement
- Injury/leave of absence
- Medical care claims
How do you create a culture of wellness?

Connect People To Purpose

- Vision and mission
- Business plan/strategy
- Goals and performance
- Culture and climate
- Individual experience
What are your goals?

- Improved health outcomes
- Reduced cost
- Improved employee experience and well-being

Hint: Focus on all three. Focusing on only one will result in deficit in another.
CDC Definition of Culture of Health

- The creation of a working environment where employee health and safety is valued, supported and promoted through workplace health programs, policies, benefits, and environmental supports.

- *The results of this culture change include engaged and empowered employees, an impact on health care costs, and improved worker productivity.*

http://www.cdc.gov/workplacehealthpromotion/glossary/index.html#C9
Culture vs. Climate

- **Culture:**
  - Behavioral norms
  - Sets of beliefs, practices, traditions
  - “The way things are done here”

- **Climate:**
  - Atmosphere created based on culture. Perception of what it feels like to work here.

- *Culture and climate should be congruent*
Look at the whole picture.

Ensure messages and goals are reinforced by the entire employee experience.

- Environment
- Formal systems and policies
- Senior leaders
- Management styles and messages
- Co-worker relationships
- Programs and resources available
- Benefit design and structure
- Motivators
What will your employees value?

- No one size fits all.
- No magic wand—you have to follow the process to identify what best meets your organization’s needs.
  - Don’t assume you know
    - Conduct a needs assessment
    - Involve employees in process.
- Look beyond the traditional.
- Drive health improvement and motivation.
  - Don’t create frustrated and overwhelmed employees.
- Reinforce change with support.
  - Clearly communicate programs and resources available.
- Be transparent.
Look for opportunities to add healthy habits into employees’ day to day experience

**My day**
- Overbooked day. Go to cafeteria, grab pizza and iced tea, work through lunch
- 3 pm. Need pick-me-up. Coffee and cookies at a meeting
- Rush home, traffic, drive thru dinner
- 10 pm. Working in bed
- 11:30 Exhausted but can’t sleep.

**Healthier Day**
- Healthy breakfast at my desk purchased on site
- Break for lunch, healthy, quick, affordable meal purchased in the cafeteria.
- Walking meeting with supervisor-15 minutes
- 3 pm. Water and healthy snack at meeting
- Rush home, traffic, healthy dinner purchased from cafeteria
- 10 pm working downstairs
- 10:30 pm phone alarm says get ready for bed.
Plan for evaluation from the start.

- What are you measuring?
  - Connects to your goals
    - Participation
    - Behavior
    - Knowledge
    - Outcomes
- What return on investment are you looking for?
- What is your definition of success?
Ensure your program is legal and compliant.

“ Appropriately designed wellness programs have the potential to contribute importantly to promote health and prevent disease.”

- Employees may be incentivized either for participation or a health contingent reward under Wellness Regulations in ACA.
- Program design must follow compliance laws and federal guidelines for implementation.
- Needs to be:
  - Safe
  - Effective
  - Timely
  - Participant-centered
  - Equitable

- EEOC has proposed new regulations for wellness programs - currently under review.
Worksite Wellness Best Practices

- Senior Leadership endorses and supports wellness throughout the organization.
- Wellness Champions advocate for wellness at grass roots level.
- Environment that supports healthy lifestyle choices.
- Policies that support a healthy workplace.
- Health benefit design that focuses on prevention and early detection/care.
- Incentives always be applied within the context of communications, climate and culture of the organization.

http://journals.lww.com/joem/Fulltext/2012/07000/Guidance_for_a_Reasonably_Designed_.20.aspx
Take it step by step!

A Where I am now

1. Head *towards better health*
2. Make a plan
3. Steer around barriers
4. Keep going!

B Where I want to be!

Success

what people think it looks like

what it really looks like

Proprietary and confidential