

**WHITEPAPER:**  
**AN OPTIMAL MODEL FOR WORKSITE HEALTH CARE AND  
WELLNESS CLINICS**  
**DECEMBER 2012**

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Not surprisingly, research confirms that 50% to 70% of all diseases are related to health risk factors that are modifiable or likely preventable.<sup>1</sup> The universal health risk factors include smoking, obesity, physical inactivity and poor diet. Research also shows that these risk factors can be modified through an effective worksite health and wellness clinic (“WHWC”) program designed to optimize employee health and productivity, lower employer healthcare costs and create positive return on investments (“ROI”) for employers.<sup>2</sup>

How a WHWC program is structured can greatly influence its success. There is no “one size fits all” optimal model or structure. Each employer must adapt a model that fits with the type of organization, the diversity of its workforce, the needs and preferences of the employer and its employees, the employer’s available resources, its culture, and its level of leadership support for investing in WHWC programs.

Based on an analysis of various research studies and articles, some of the key components found in the most successful WHWC programs generally include the following.

**I. A comprehensive program**

An employer should create a comprehensive program covering a broad range of health areas and intervention methods to ensure that employees can find a portion of the program that best addresses their needs and interests. The programs and interventions should address illness and disease as well as encourage healthy lifestyle and wellness.<sup>3</sup> While the wellness portion of the program can be phased in, having a comprehensive plan encompassing both health and wellness from the onset of a program is a best practice.

Further, an employer should determine the level of intensity of the interventions. Does the employer want to simply conduct a one-time health risk assessment and provide health

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<sup>1</sup> Center for Prevention and Health Services, Health Improvement: *A Comprehensive Guide to Designing, Implementing and Evaluating Worksite Programs*, Issue Brief, Vol. 1., No. 1 (hereinafter “Center for Prevention and Health Services”), 3 (Nov. 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Ron Z. Goetzel and Ronald J. Ozminkowski, *The Health and Cost Benefits of Worksite Health-Promotion Programs*, (hereinafter “Goetzel”), 305, 307 (2008).

<sup>3</sup> Center for Prevention and Health Services, 13.

education material to employees, or does the employer want to provide periodic screenings, one-on-one counseling and follow up evaluations, and ROI for the particular employer for each scenario?<sup>4</sup>

## **II. Employer culture**

A WHWC program will be more successful if it aligns and incorporates health and wellness goals with the employer's mission and framework. This can be achieved by engaging all levels of management to help define and align the health and wellness goals, and by ensuring that the WHWC plan or benefit design also supports such goals.<sup>5</sup> Integration of these goals and plans will help employees feel and become more engaged<sup>6</sup> and allow better use of company resources and facilities to promote health and wellness objectives.<sup>7</sup>

Not only should management and employees support a WHWC program's health and wellness goals, physicians and clinic staff should also support such objectives. A dedicated and well-informed staff is crucial for creating a program plan, accessing and disseminating educational resources and marketing the program.<sup>8</sup> An employer case study of H.J. Heinz Company ("Heinz") conducted by the National Business Group on Health ("NBGH") illustrates that although participants understand the benefits of the program, physicians often do not. Heinz acted to address this issue by educating its physicians through various methods such as: (a) providing its employees with education material in hope this education will increase the employees' ability to communicate with their physicians, (b) identifying the healthcare and wellness program on beneficiaries' ID cards to assure that they are correctly charged, and (c) asking its health plans to educate providers and distribute information about the program.<sup>9</sup>

Similarly, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention ("CDC") emphasizes the need and importance of educating the staff of WHWCs. Areas of provider education should include employee wellness, fitness and health benefits, all of which can be taught through certification courses, seminars, workshops, conferences and meetings.<sup>10</sup>

## **III. Needs assessment with adequate follow-up**

Most successful WHWC programs generally start with needs assessment of employees' current health status and lifestyle decisions in an effort to determine the most effective clinic programs or activities that fit the employee's particular needs and interests. There are many

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<sup>4</sup> Center for Prevention and Health Services, 7.

<sup>5</sup> Ryan Brauns of Rockford Consulting and Brokerage also emphasizes the need to align the WHWC's mission and integrate into the employer's culture. Further, the plan design must also support the WHWC's mission.

<sup>6</sup> Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury, *Worksite Health Promotion: Wellness in the Workplace* (hereinafter "Defense Centers for Excellence"), 7 (April 2011).

<sup>7</sup> Goetzel, 314; Center for Prevention and Health Services, 9.

<sup>8</sup> Defense Centers of Excellence, 9.

<sup>9</sup> National Business Group on Health, *An Employer Case Study of H.J. Heinz Company, Making Preventive Care a Company Focus*, (hereinafter "Heinz"), 3 (November 2009).

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/hwi/programdesign/continuing\\_ed.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/hwi/programdesign/continuing_ed.htm).

methods of conducting such an assessment. The CDC suggests that an employer use health risk appraisals to evaluate health risk factors, employee surveys and questionnaires to assess health needs and interests, or create a wellness committee and allow employees to give their direct input on program design.<sup>11</sup>

Once an employee participates in the WHWC programs, the employer should provide ongoing and persistent follow-up counseling, which is critical in helping the employee maintain any positives gains from the program.<sup>12</sup>

#### **IV. Ability of the WHWC to attract and optimize participation**

The ability for a WHWC program to attract participation is a fundamental factor in a program's success. Many methods can be used to achieve optimal participation rates such as marketing the clinic's mission, providing incentives to participants and their dependents for successfully achieving healthy living and treatment regime compliance, and ensuring participant satisfaction.

##### Marketing

An employer can market the clinic's objectives by various methods of communication such as pamphlets, posters visible at work, e-mails, newsletters, intranet, meetings, themed campaigns and social networking activities (socializing the message).<sup>13</sup>

The Heinz study conducted by the NBGH referenced earlier in this paper also shows that Heinz implemented has had preventive care since 2003, but realized that its employees were not utilizing the services provided. To address this issue, in 2007, Heinz created a five-year healthcare strategy to lower healthcare costs and enhance employee productivity, including improving the benefits structure of the program and participation rates. To help promote participation, Heinz created communication materials to educate its employees about the importance of preventive health. Heinz also recruited 50 employee volunteers to market its program at various locations throughout its organization.<sup>14</sup> Although at the time of this case study, it was too early for Heinz to evaluate the results of its healthcare strategy, Heinz did notice that its continuous communication efforts and its culture of health and wellness motivated its employees to view health as more of a personal responsibility.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to the Heinz case study, the NBGH conducted other employer case studies. One such case study is of General Electric Company's ("GE") WHWC. In 2007, GE created two highly successful health prevention initiatives and developed a 3-prong

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<sup>11</sup> Goetzel, 311; <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/hwi/programdesign/index.htm>. In OSF's case, the County already have a wellness committee formed

<sup>12</sup> Goetzel, 313 (providing that several studies showed that one-time screenings and counseling on employees who participated in blood pressure treatment, worksite weight-loss, or smoking cessation programs can have short-term effects (up to 3 months); however, the effects disappear within a year without additional follow-up).

<sup>13</sup> Center for Prevention and Health Services, 9.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.wbgh.org/pdfs/Heinz%20Case%20Study%20-%20FINAL.pdf>, 1-3.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.wbgh.org/pdfs/Heinz%20Case%20Study%20-%20FINAL.pdf>, 4.

approach for success. This approach stresses the importance of conveying the program's message to the employees and boosting their participation. The first prong communicated the importance of preventive care to its employees by using online resources, print posters, brochures and newsletters. The second prong promoted and marketed the objectives by engaging its employees through interactive programs such as interactive luncheons.<sup>16</sup> An evaluation of GE's efforts at the end of 2008 show that GE's participation rate had increased from 60% in 2007 to 90%.<sup>17</sup>

### Incentives

Providing incentives to participants is another effective way to achieve and maintain high participation rates. An employer can provide financial rewards for participation, such as healthcare premium discounts, health savings account bonuses, reduced co-pay, and cash rewards.<sup>18</sup> Employers can also give financial rewards for certain health results, such as attaining healthy weight, lowering blood pressure, and stopping smoking. Other types of rewards may encompass employee awards and recognition, and gifts.<sup>19</sup>

### Satisfaction evaluation

Once employees are engaged in a program, it is essential to ensure that they are satisfied with the program. This can increase the likelihood that the employee will continue using the program or will share their experiences with other employees. Employers can create surveys to obtain feedback from all participants, which can be used to improve or enhance the program.<sup>20</sup>

## **V. A system to measure and communicate program results**

An effective WHWC program will generally result in improved health and wellness for employees, and provide direct health cost savings and positive ROI to employers that invest in the program. It is crucial for an employer to develop a methodology to systematically collect data and have a process in place to measure and report these outcomes. Although the upfront cost of associated with implementing such a system may be high, it is an important way of showing effectiveness of the program for both the employer and its employees and return on investment for employers.<sup>21</sup> The key ROI drivers are:

### Employee productivity

Employee productivity measurement is an emerging study and thus there are few established evaluation devices available for employers. However, some employers are

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<sup>16</sup> [http://www.wbgh.org/pdfs/NBGH\\_GE%20Case%20Study\\_4%209%2009.pdf](http://www.wbgh.org/pdfs/NBGH_GE%20Case%20Study_4%209%2009.pdf), 1.

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.wbgh.org/pdfs/NBGH\\_GE%20Case%20Study\\_4%209%2009.pdf](http://www.wbgh.org/pdfs/NBGH_GE%20Case%20Study_4%209%2009.pdf), 4.

<sup>18</sup> Goetzel, 314 (some researchers indicate that incentives of at least \$100 is necessary to encourage employees to participate). Center for Prevention and Health Services, 10 (other research shows that an incentive higher than \$25 for participation may lower the cost-effectiveness of the program).

<sup>19</sup> Center for Prevention and Health Services, 9.

<sup>20</sup> Jessica Grossmeier, Paul E. Terry, Aldo Cipriotti, and Jeffrey E. Burtaine, *The Art of Health Promotion, Best Practices in Evaluating Worksite Health Promotion Programs*, (hereinafter "Grossmeier"), 2 (Jan/Feb 2010).

<sup>21</sup> Defense Centers of Excellence, 9.

able to utilize and track objective measures of productivity data such as absence, worker's compensation claims, and nonoccupational disability claims.<sup>22</sup>

#### Employer healthcare costs

There is no set method to track and calculate changes in healthcare costs saving to the employer. Some employers use models that monetize changes in health results, while others track changes in healthcare service utilization and apply benchmark costs to utilization of service, and some track changes in costs themselves.<sup>23</sup>

#### Return on investment for the employer

Like healthcare costs, there is no single approach to track and measure ROI. ROI depends on the right balance between investing sufficient money into the right programs and sustaining the programs by offering them at reasonable costs.<sup>24</sup> Some studies indicate that programs grounded in behavior change theory and use individualized communications and counseling for high health risk participants are likely to produce positive return.<sup>25</sup>

Some of the major healthcare providers using systems to track and measure a WHWC program's results include Carehere, LLC ("Carehere"), Comprehensive Health Services, Inc. ("CHS"), and Marathon Health ("Marathon"). Carehere uses two systems: (i) a HIPAA-compliant system that allows employees to access their personal health information from any computer through a secured system, as well as non-personal health information reports and tools; and (ii) a health risk assessment system that allows employees to receive lab results in charts and graphs categorized by major categories of health conditions, and also permits physicians and employers to identify trends and address major health concerns and reduce associated costs.<sup>26</sup>

Marathon also uses several systems: (i) a eHealth Portal that allows employees to access their health history, risk assessment questionnaire and personal health record, and also provides employees with custom-tailored guidance and information, wellness profile and scorecard, and various interactive tools; and (ii) evidence-based clinical support tools (such as Problem-Knowledge Couplers and UpToDate, Electronic Medical Records, and a clinical management system that includes workflow tools) to help physicians and clinical staff manage patient data. Most importantly, Marathon's systems operate on a HIPAA-compliant technology platform that permits employees to access accurate and up-to-date reports while protecting confidentiality.<sup>27</sup>

Similarly, CHS's Optic platform is a medical record and enterprise practice management system that measures provider and patient behavior, tracks and reports results through data

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<sup>22</sup> Grossmeier, 3.

<sup>23</sup> Grossmeier, 3.

<sup>24</sup> Grossmeier, 3.

<sup>25</sup> Goetzel, 309.

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.carehere.com/services.asp>.

<sup>27</sup> <http://www1.marathon-health.com/medical-home-at-work/technology/>.

storage and predictive modeling. The system tracks and reports in areas such as health improvement clinical indicators, chronic condition management, financial summary, return on investment. The predictive modeling identifies cost effective strategies that reduce long-term health risks and health costs while improving productivity.<sup>28</sup>

Once an approach is in place to measure ROI, several recent studies suggest that it generally takes about 18 months from the start of a WHWC program for employers to realize any ROI.<sup>29</sup> This, however, may be a barrier to initial employer investment, as some employers may want quicker returns.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, for those employers who are willing to wait to recoup their investment, ROI will likely be quite significant. Thus, the long-term benefits to employers and employees will most likely outweigh any short-term savings.

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<sup>28</sup><http://www.chsonsite.com/site/?q=whyCHS/technology-optic;>  
[http://www.chsonsite.com/site/?q=whyCHS/clinical-reporting.](http://www.chsonsite.com/site/?q=whyCHS/clinical-reporting)

<sup>29</sup> [www.wellnessproposals.com/company-wellness-roi.html](http://www.wellnessproposals.com/company-wellness-roi.html).

<sup>30</sup> Goetzel, 306.