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## The Development of an Employee Wellness Program Within a Mid-Sized Company

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ABSTRACT

THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN EMPLOYEE WELLNESS PROGRAM WITHIN A MID-SIZED  
COMPANY

By

PATRICIA JENNIFER ELKON

April 20, 2016

**INTRODUCTION:** With over 160 million Americans currently in the workforce, employee wellness programs have proven to be a viable method of reaching a large population with an objective of improving health outcomes. These programs can encourage the awareness of health-related issues including nutrition, physical activity, preventative health screening, and stress management, and they also can serve to improve employee morale and/or engagement. Moreover, they can often help to reduce healthcare costs to both the organization and the individual employees.

**AIM:** The purpose of this capstone was to design a framework for an employee wellness program that could be utilized within a mid-sized private logistics company with multiple locations across the United States.

**METHODS:** The program was developed using the Precede portion of the PRECEDE-PROCEED model as the guiding framework. An essential first step of the program development involved a synthesis of published evidence involving published reports, reviews, and evaluations of other previously implemented worksite wellness initiatives.

**RESULTS:** A worksite wellness plan was proposed for a midsize company that addresses incentive policies, environmental changes, and recommended health education and behavioral structures for enhanced health and wellness among a workforce of approximately 800 employees.

**DISCUSSION:** The Proceed model steps will ensure a comprehensive evaluation of the program's immediate impacts and long-term outcomes over time. It is important that the short, medium, and long term goals of the program are identified so that an evaluation process can be implemented to see if these specific objectives are met through the initiatives implemented in the program.

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COMPANY

by

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B.A., NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

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PATRICIA JENNIFER ELKON

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Introduction**

In an effort to both improve the overall health outcomes of employees while reducing the amount of spending on healthcare costs, some employers have implemented employee wellness programs that seek to provide more opportunities (and sometimes incentives) for employees to drive actions that are designed to promote their general health and well-being. These programs often promote aspects of healthy eating, increased physical activity, and a push to reduce the usage of drug, alcohol, and tobacco-related products.

The purpose of this capstone is to design a framework for an employee wellness program that could be utilized within a mid-sized private company with multiple locations across the United States. The program will be developed using the PRECEDE-PROCEED model as the guiding framework, but will also pull from published evidence involving published reports, reviews, and evaluations of other previously implemented worksite wellness initiatives.

### **Background**

Each year, nearly 900,000 Americans die prematurely from the five leading causes of death—heart disease, cancer, chronic lower respiratory diseases, stroke, and unintentional injuries. However, according to a 2014 study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 20-40% of the deaths from each cause could have been prevented (Yoon, 2014). Prevention is attainable in large part through the modification of certain personal behaviors that have been linked to risk factors responsible for each of the leading causes of death. These

risk factors include behaviors related to tobacco and/or alcohol use, poor diet and/or obesity, and lack of physical activity, which can increase the risk of heart disease, cancer, chronic respiratory disease, stroke, and even unintentional injuries.

As explained above, modifiable personal behaviors can largely influence a person's risk associated with one of the five leading causes of death. According to the 2013 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) data, 28.3% of respondents nationwide identified as obese and 35.5% identified as overweight (Yoon, 2014). Additionally, 38.5% of adults identified as consuming less than one serving of fruit per day and 22.4% of adults identified as consuming less than one serving of vegetables per day. Moreover, 26.3% of respondents identified as adults who engage in no leisure time physical activity. These behaviors directly correlate to the risk factors associated with the leading causes of death in the United States. However, through modifying these behaviors, prevention is possible and a person's individual risk can be reduced. In an effort to modify these behaviors, an intervention can be used as an effective tool in targeting key populations to improve individual health outcomes.

Employee wellness programs can be an effective method of intervention to promote the health and wellness of employees at a given organization. Given the number of people currently in the workforce in the United States and the time typically spent by this population at their worksite, employee wellness programs have been seen as an effective way to access a large population of people with the intent to effect change and promote positive health outcomes. These programs can encourage the awareness of health-related issues, but can also serve to improve employee morale or engagement, reduce absenteeism among employees, and can often help to reduce healthcare costs to both the organization and the individual

employees. Moreover, employee wellness programs have been proven in some studies to increase the productivity of employees, as well as improve the quality of their work outputs. In short, their focus can benefit both employees and the employers themselves. Specifically, these programs can focus on improving specific aspects of health, including improved nutrition, increased physical activity, and preventative health screenings. With over 160 million Americans currently in the workforce, employee wellness programs have proven to be a viable method of reaching a large population with an objective of improving health outcomes.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Review of Literature**

Currently, there are over 160 million Americans in the workforce. However, in part due to unhealthy lifestyles such as poor nutrition habits, smoking addictions, or low physical activity levels, many of these individuals are plagued with obesity and other conditions that result in a reduction of potential productivity and an increase in absenteeism. According to a study conducted by Goetzel et al. (2010), it was identified that obese employees had 20% more doctor visits and 26% more emergency room visits compared to their non-obese peer employees. This increase in absenteeism reduces the productivity levels of employees and can add increased cost to the organization to ensure adequate coverage of work during both planned and unplanned absences.

Despite an increasingly unhealthy workforce, there is overwhelming evidence that demonstrates the effectiveness of worksite wellness programs in improving employee health, thus promoting attendance and supporting greater productivity levels by company employees. This is shown in studies such as those conducted by both Romney et al. (2011) and Racette et al. (2009), which demonstrated a measurable reduction in body weight, waist circumference, and BMI. Additionally, the programs explored in these studies also saw an increase in the number of minutes of exercise per week among participants. In many cases, improved employee health can also result in a significant reduction of costs—both to the employee and

the company employer as well. One study determined an average savings of almost \$5.00 for every one dollar spent on implementing an employee wellness program (Aldana, 1998).

Moreover, that same study saw a 14% reduction in days lost due to illness or disability following the implementation of the program (Aldana, 1998).

### ***Examination of Wellness Program Design***

To better evaluate the effectiveness of different types of employee wellness programs, a review of the scientific literature concerning worksite wellness programs was conducted. Both primary research studies as well as review articles examining the structure, health focus, and participation levels of worksite wellness programs in the United States were included in the search. The studies reviewed ranged both in length of time and also in the number of participants examined in each study. As for study design, most of the reviewed studies utilized a prospective or retrospective approach that compared a control population to a population that received the intervention for comparison. This approach is often helpful, as it allows for the results to be observed from both the control population and the changed population, and then seeks to understand the difference. While reviewing these programs within the context of this capstone, it was helpful to review prospective and retrospective studies that examined a control population so that greater insight could be obtained as to the effectiveness of specific approaches utilized across the programs that were explored. In doing this, best practices can be identified which can then be incorporated into the program that is sought to be built out in this capstone.

### ***Program Structures***

In reviewing literature on the topic, it can be seen that the structure of programs implemented across studies truly varies based on the needs of the business, the resources available, and support from key policy makers or stakeholders. However, the structure of the programs explored generally seek to drive new initiatives through policy changes, environmental changes, or behavioral changes across individuals through the implementation of educational efforts and/or learning experiences.

### ***Incentive Policies***

Policy changes generally seek to modify various rules or procedures that exist within an organization. This strategy was utilized in Anderson et al. (2009), where a systematic review was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of employee wellness programs that specifically focus on improving employee nutrition and physical activity behaviors to promote health among employees. In this study, companies allowed flexibility in the times allotted for breaks or meals at the worksite to encourage employee engagement in physical activities during lunch, either through the utilization of onsite gyms available to employees or through nearby walking paths available (Anderson et al., 2009). Additionally, companies explored in this study also offered policy changes that would reimburse employees for the costs of gym memberships in an effort to reduce barriers that might currently exist for employees to engage in physical activity (Anderson et al., 2009). This approach was also utilized in the Romney et al. (2011) study, which explored the effectiveness of employee wellness programs that specifically emphasized obesity management programs. In the programs explored in this study, companies utilized an approach to subsidize the cost of off-site gym memberships if there was no fitness

center available on-site (Romney et al., 2011). Another study that offered this incentive was the Long and Sheehan (2010) study, which implemented a study that explored the effectiveness of an employee wellness program instituted at a Midwest hospital with approximately 4500 employees over a four year period. In an effort to increase the physical fitness levels of their employees, the company offered a reimbursement for gym memberships to enable access to their employees. Similar to the Anderson study, the Long and Sheehan (2010) study also offered flexibility in the working hours whenever possible to encourage employee participation in either gym activities or nearby walking trails.

Other companies, such as those explored in both the Long and Sheehan (2010) study and in a study conducted by Serxner et al. (2012), implemented programs that addressed policy changes through the implementation of a Health Risk Assessment (HRA). Within this model, employees in both of these programs were offered an opportunity to participate in the wellness program upon completion of an HRA, which served as the initial point of entry towards receiving wellness resources. In each of these models, the HRA captured information on nutrition, physical activity, health history, stress, and well-being, which then offered personalized wellness reports that provided both education and individualized action plans for addressing any areas of concern (Long and Sheehan, 2010). In both the Long and Sheehan, and Serxner et al. studies, employees were incentivized to participate in completing the HRA through the company offering either a cash incentive (Long and Sheehan, 2010) or offering a reduction in insurance enrollment costs (Serxner et al., 2012). In both of these programs, because participation in the program was restricted to those individuals who completed the

HRA, the HRA can be seen as a policy change incorporated to increase the effectiveness of the objectives identified by their wellness programs.

### *Environmental Changes*

Environmental changes were also utilized in exploring the various structures incorporated by the programs explored. Environmental changes involve modifying physical structures to encourage participation in a given component of the intervention. In the Anderson et al. study, examples of this can be seen through the modification of healthy food options available to employees in both on-site cafeterias and also in vending machines. Some programs even offered signage to offer guidance on healthy choices by using a specific icon to indicate “heart healthy choices” or by posting calorie counts (Anderson et al., 2009). A few programs explored in this study even modified environmental constraints by building on-site fitness centers to allow greater access for their employees. The Romney study also demonstrated a similar environmental approach, as the program offered both on-site cafeterias with healthy food options and on-site fitness centers which were made available to employees (Romney et al., 2011). This program also ensured the availability of adequate on-site walking trails to further encourage physical activity among employees. In the Long and Sheehan study (2010), similar approaches were used in making environmental changes through the program to offer on-site cafeterias with healthy food options and access to on-site gym facilities. Another environmental approach that this study utilized was to limit the availability of designated smoking areas. In reducing access to smoking areas, the intention was to hopefully deter smokers from smoking at work.

### *Health Education and Behavioral Structures*

Behavioral change approaches were perhaps the most commonly used strategies in the programs explored as a method of reaching the intended objectives of the wellness programs. Behavioral structures focused on implementing educational efforts as a way to impact employee wellness through changed behaviors. In the Anderson et al. (2009) study, these initiatives included displaying educational posters and pamphlets in common areas of the office to educate employees on a variety of health-related topics. Programs in this study also posted educational resources on the benefits of healthy diet and exercise on the company intranet webpage (Anderson et al., 2009).

Behavioral structures were a significant portion of the initiatives implemented in the study conducted by Romney as well. This program implemented on-site programming for employees to participate in during business hours, such as “Weight Watchers™ at Work” and structured walking clubs to promote physical activity during business hours. Additionally, fitness professionals were hired by the organization to lead educational “lunch and learn” sessions on fitness related topics and to educate employees on best exercise related practices. This program also implemented fitness challenges to track daily steps and the number of stairs climbed to motivate employees to participate in fitness activities through healthy competition (Romney et al., 2011). The Long and Sheehan (2010) study also incorporated behavioral structures similar to the ones explored in the other studies reviewed here. The Long and Sheehan (2010) study incorporated a “Weight Watchers™ at Work” program to encourage healthy eating and hired professional wellness coaches to offer training, education, and guidance to individual employees on opportunities to improve their health behaviors. The

Serxner et al. (2012) study also offered the resource of wellness coaches available during business hours to assist with educating employees on health and fitness related topics.

Another study explored that heavily utilized behavioral structures into the program design is a study conducted by Racette et al. (2009). This study was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of an employee wellness program that focused specifically on improving the cardiovascular health of employees. The primary components of the program were educational and behavioral-based, focusing on opportunities to educate the employees on healthy behaviors. Examples of the program content components include the availability of on-site nutrition groups such as “Weight Watchers™ at Work”, as well as monthly lunchtime seminars that focused on providing nutrition and exercise-related information to employees. The program also sought to increase the physical activity levels of employees by offering on-site group exercise classes led by both trained employees and professionals. Additionally, they provided walking maps of available on-site walking paths that employees could utilize throughout the workday. The program also disseminated additional educational content through monthly newsletters that were specifically designed to share material related to health and wellness initiatives. Finally, similar to the Anderson et al. (2009) study, this program also incorporated fitness challenges into the program design to encourage increased daily step counts and increased stair usage among employees.

While a variety of strategies have been reviewed that address policy opportunities, environmental conditions, and behavioral approaches, it is important to not only review their effectiveness in terms of employee participation, but also to review the costs (both monetary and non-monetary) associated with each type of programming. For instance, while the Health

Risk Assessment (HRA) approach used in both the Serxner et al. (2012) and Long and Sheehan (2010) studies can be seen as an effective tool, the startup cost to initiate the program is significantly higher to the employer than some other initiatives, given the costs associated with the HRA screenings themselves. It has been found that worksite wellness programs with HRA screenings may involve more participant time as well, due to the completion of the HRA as an eligibility requirement for engaging in the overall program offerings. This was described in both the Serxner et al. (2012) and Long and Sheehan (2010) studies. Given that an HRA must be completed to participate, participation in the these types of program will likely be much lower than in other behavioral or even some environmental approaches, which offer a greater number of opportunities to participate. For instance, while the behavioral-based program described in the Romney et al. (2011) study indicated participation levels at around 55%, the program in the Serxner et al. (2012) study, which required the completion of an HRA, only had participation levels of 18.3% in the first year of the program. This could be due to the fact that many behavioral approaches require significantly less of an initial commitment from both the employer and the employees, both in terms of time and financial resources, which may also attribute to why they are so widely utilized across the studies explored. Although HRA-based programs tend to take a more personalized approach, organizations may opt for programs that promote increased participation, especially in the earlier and more formative years of a worksite wellness program.

### ***Health Focus***

As indicated, employee wellness programs often vary in the health focus that they wish to influence through the incorporation of their program. Across the programs explored,

common areas of focus include improved nutrition, increased physical activity, and smoking cessation. More specifically, the Romney et al. (2011) and Racette et al. (2009) programs focused on improving both the nutrition and the physical activity levels of their employees, while the Long and Sheehan (2010) and Serxner et al. (2012) programs focused on addressing nutrition, physical activity, and smoking cessation. Within the Anderson et al. (2009) study, some of the programs focused only on improving either dietary nutrition or physical activity levels. Other programs included in the Anderson et al. (2009) study did evaluate interventions that placed a specific focus on improving both nutrition and physical activity levels, but they all refrained from addressing a third component of smoking cessation or another health focus.

In reviewing the variety of health foci across the worksite wellness studies, information can be gleaned as to the effectiveness of the programs as the number of foci and desired objectives increases. Ultimately, it was uncovered that programs with a focus of either one or two objectives exhibited greater success than programs that attempted to improve a greater number of health outcomes such as improved nutrition, increased physical activity, and smoking cessation. This is seen when exploring the results of the Romney et al. (2011), Racette et al. (2009), and Anderson et al. (2009) studies in comparison to the Long and Sheehan (2010) and Serxner et al. (2012) studies. While all move the needle in influencing the intended objectives, the Romney et al. (2011), Racette et al. (2009), and Anderson et al. (2009) studies were able to obtain greater results given their narrow focus. Long and Sheehan (2010) and Serxner et al. (2012) saw improvements across a greater number of areas given the breadth of their programs, but the results weren't as significant in any one area given their competing focuses.

## ***Participation***

In reviewing the participation across the wellness programs explored, a variety of techniques were utilized to encourage employee participation in the programming being offered. Participation in the intervention is obviously an important factor, as efforts are being placed to improve a specific health outcome of the intended population. With that in mind, many programs used incentives as a way to increase participation. Either cash incentives or reductions in medical insurance enrollment costs were offered for employees who participated in the HRA programs utilized in the Serxner et al. (2012) and Long and Sheehan studies. Incentives were also utilized in behavioral based programming, such as those found in the Racette et al. (2009) and Romney et al. (2011) studies. In each of these programs, prizes were awarded to the winners of the daily step count and stair count fitness challenges. These prizes were either financial, in the form of cash or gift cards, or non-monetary, in the form of fitness related gear such as pedometers or water bottles. However, in each of these studies, incentives were recognized as a viable strategy to increase participation among employees.

Additional methods outside of incentives were also employed to increase participation across the programs explored. One strategy involved the use of more structured programming rather than self-directed programming. This method was utilized in the Anderson et al. (2009) study, where structured group meetings such as brown bag lunches and organized walking clubs were implemented to encourage accountability across employees. Additionally, the Racette et al. (2009) program and the Romney et al. (2011) study address the use of wellness committees to increase the participation of employees in their worksite wellness programs. Using this method, employees are invited to join the planning and execution efforts that are

being led by the corporate health department initiating the wellness program. This helps to ensure that the initiatives that are implemented represent the diversity of employee ideas and interests, which increases the likelihood for employees to participate. Additionally, members of the wellness committee can help to recruit participants, publicize events, and even coordinate the programs themselves. Both the Racette et al. (2009) and Romney et al. (2011) program demonstrated that employees can be highly effective in motivating their peers to participate in various aspects of behavioral wellness programming.

### ***Health Programming of Worksite Wellness Programs***

In exploring the details of the specific programming utilized in the employee wellness programs examined in this literature review, a wide variety of approaches were identified. Consolidated below in Table 1A are the techniques and strategies utilized across these programs to improve nutrition, increase physical activity levels, and promote smoking cessation through work-place led initiatives. The table shows not only the specific technique, but explores each strategy by both program structure type and the health focus that the approach seeks to address. Finally, the use of incentives to influence participation and a rough estimate of cost is factored into the table to represent the practices implemented across the various programs explored.

**TABLE 1A—Examples of Wellness Program Initiatives across Various Program Structures by Area of Focus**

Examples of Wellness Program Initiatives across Various Program Structures by Area of Focus				
POLICY STRUCTURE				
	Technique	Program Source(s)	Incentives Offered?	Anticipated Cost
Nutrition	Offer a cash incentive to complete an HRA	Long/Sheehan, Serxner, Anderson	✓	\$\$
	Reduced enrollment cost in insurance upon completing an HRA	Serxner	✓	\$\$
Physical Activity	Offer a gym reimbursement to cover the costs of employees for gym memberships	Anderson, Romney, Long/Sheehan	✓	\$\$
	Flexibility offered in the times allotted for breaks/meals at the worksite to allow employee engagement in physical activities during lunch	Anderson, Long/Sheehan		\$
Smoking Cessation	Offer to cover the costs for cessation related items or to offer a discount on health insurance for non-smokers	Long/Sheehan	✓	\$\$
	Reimburse employees for enrollment costs of smoking cessation programs	Long/Sheehan	✓	\$\$
ENVIRONMENTAL STRUCTURE				
	Technique	Program Source(s)	Incentives Offered?	Anticipated Cost
Nutrition	Increase access to healthy food choices while at work through improvement in vending machine options and food available at on-site cafeterias	Anderson, Romney, Long/Sheehan		\$\$
	Improve education on healthy choices by posting calories and nutrition information on vending machines and in on-site cafeterias	Anderson, Romney, Long/Sheehan		\$
	Utilize incentive stickers on healthy choice items available in vending machines or in on-site cafeterias to inform the population on healthier choice options	Anderson		\$
Physical Activity	Offer a gym available to employees at work	Anderson, Romney		\$\$\$
	Convert stairwells to walking areas by improving the lighting and adding colorful, motivational posters	Racette		\$
	Build out walking trails on the company property to promote physical activity during work	Romney		\$\$\$
Smoking Cessation	Promote smoke-free buildings and environments to reduce access for smokers and to make smoking less convenient for those that wish to participate in smoking activities (only allow smoking in designated areas)	Long/Sheehan, Serxner		\$
BEHAVIORAL STRUCTURE				
	Technique	Program Source(s)	Incentives Offered?	Anticipated Cost
Nutrition	Sponsor a company weight reduction program with support group for weight management while at work (i.e. "Biggest Loser at Work")	Romney, Long/Sheehan, Racette	✓	\$\$
	Offer information, ideas, and recipes for packing healthy lunches	Anderson, Racette, Serxner		\$
	Post myplate.gov charts/nutrition-themed educational resources in the breakroom and on-site cafeteria areas to educate employees on nutritious eating	Anderson, Racette		\$
	Offer nutrition-related books/brochures that can be borrowed among employees	Anderson		\$
	Conduct structured "Lunch and Learn" sessions on nutrition related topics	Anderson, Racette	✓	\$
	Publish a workplace wellness newsletter highlighting content related to nutrition	Anderson, Racette, Serxner		\$
	Hold a health fair and invite local vendors to the office to discuss nutrition and wellness activities that may be available both at work and in the surrounding community	Long/Sheehan, Serxner, Racette		\$
Physical Activity	Hold weight loss challenges to encourage healthy competition among employees in weight loss	Long/Sheehan, Racette	✓	\$
	Publish a workplace wellness newsletter highlighting fitness/physical activity content	Anderson, Racette, Serxner		\$
	Bring in a specialist who offers biometric screenings and/or health assessments, and who can provide educational information on improving health outcomes through increased physical activity	Romney, Long/Sheehan, Serxner, Racette		\$\$
	Offer on-line coaching related to physical activity best practices	Anderson, Long/Sheehan, Serxner	✓	\$
	Conduct structured "Lunch and Learn" sessions on fitness related topics	Anderson, Racette	✓	\$
	Offer exercise-related books, videos, and brochures that can be borrowed among employees	Anderson		\$
	Hold a health fair and invite local vendors to the office to discuss physical fitness activities that may be available both at work and in the surrounding community	Romney, Long/Sheehan, Serxner, Racette		\$
	Start a walking club at work to encourage mid-day walks around the office and/or surrounding area	Romney, Racette		\$
	Disseminate walking maps of the office property with suggestions for paths and trails	Racette		\$
	Offer on-site yoga classes to relieve stress and encourage mobility of employees	Romney, Racette		\$
	Organize a negotiated discounted rate for employees to join a local gym	Romney		\$
Smoking Cessation	Hold monthly or weekly fitness challenges to encourage healthy competition among employees for various aspects of physical activities	Romney, Long/Sheehan, Racette	✓	\$
	Promote a stairwell based climbing competition to encourage using the stairs while at work	Romney, Long/Sheehan, Racette	✓	\$
	Post physical fitness themed bulletin boards in strategic areas	Anderson, Racette		\$
	Disseminate health information focused on monthly or seasonal events such as the "Great American Smokeout" and other community-wide anti-smoking events	Long/Sheehan, Serxner		\$
Smoking Cessation	Provide access to on-site smoking cessation programs during work hours	Long/Sheehan, Serxner	✓	\$\$
	Provide a tobacco savings calculator tool that shows potential savings of funds spent on tobacco	Serxner		\$

*Estimated Costs Scale: \$ - Free or Relatively Inexpensive; \$\$ - Moderately Expensive; \$\$\$ - Highly Expensive*

## **Theoretical Framework and Rationale**

Evidence from the studies explored shows that there is verification that employee wellness programs can offer effective solutions in improving the overall health of employees and reducing medical costs. More specifically, the studies provide evidence that efforts can be particularly effective when programs address a more focused goal, such as reducing obesity among employees or improving cardiac health. This may indicate that employers wishing to institute a wellness program for employees should consider utilizing a more focused program that seeks to improve a specific aspect of employee health. Once a focused program objective is determined, specific programming designed to target the improvement of health solely within this area can be developed for employees.

The program examples explored also indicate that although creating an intervention with a specific focus has proven to be most effective, offering a wide variety of opportunities for engagement throughout the programming also increases the likelihood of success in reaching the desired goal of the program. Given the vast range of interests that individual employees might have, it is important to offer a variety of engagement opportunities that might appeal to various populations of employees. Essentially, different employees will be motivated by different types of programming, and offering a wide range of engagement opportunities that all focus on obtaining the same result of improving a specific health objective will increase the likelihood that more individuals would participate in at least some of the established programs. Operating in this manner would provide a variety of opportunities for engagement that would appeal to a diverse range of interests across an entire population of employees. Ultimately, designing a program in this manner could increase the general participation in the program by

employees, which could then increase the opportunity for the effectiveness of the overall program.

Finally, the literature also emphasizes the importance of offering incentives whenever possible to drive participation. Although the incentives incorporated across programs varies dramatically, both in the scope and the corresponding cost, an increase in participation was consistently demonstrated when programs offered incentives to individuals who participated in various aspects of the programming offered. Given the importance of participation in driving the success of the program, it is beneficial to take advantage of opportunities that could potentially further increase participation among employees.

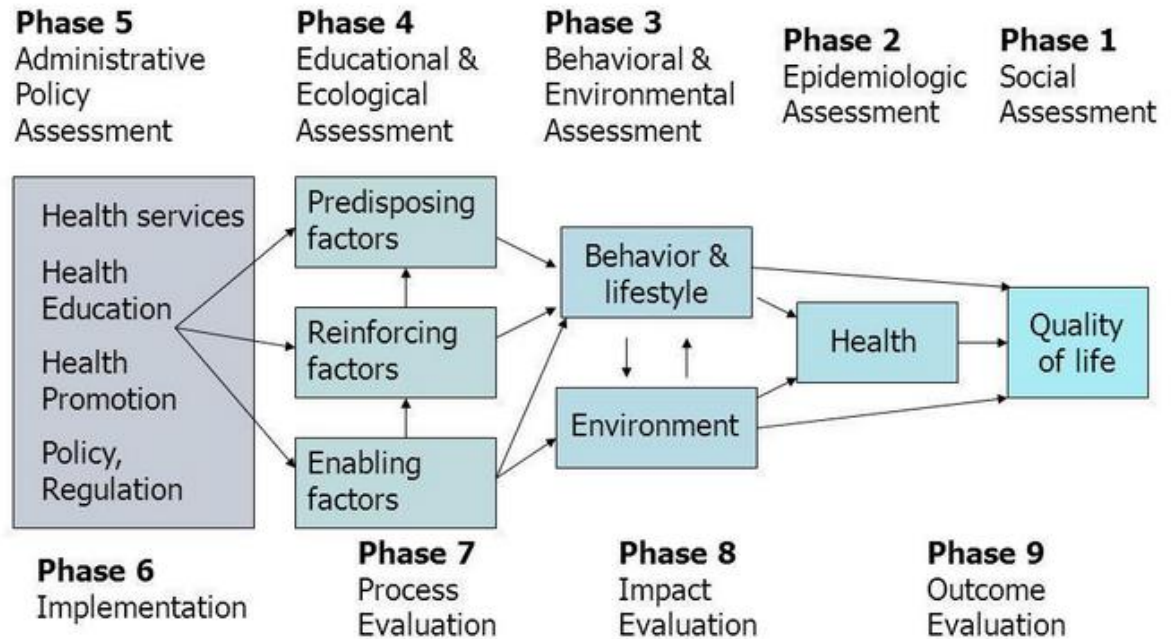
## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Methodology**

Using the recommendations from the literature review and following the Precede portion of the PRECEDE-PROCEED model, insight can be obtained that can help inform the planning and development of a worksite wellness program for a midsized corporation. The Precede portion of the model is outlined in Figure 1 to provide an outline of factors that are to be considered. Essentially, the Precede portion addresses the planning portion of an intended program before the implementation and evaluation portions occur. During these initial steps, the goal to improve an aspect of quality of life is determined through the identification of specific health priorities. It is then necessary to explore the behavioral and environmental determinants that inhibit these priorities, exploring factors that are most likely to influence health concerns associated with the identified health priority. Once these aspects are identified, they can then be translated into measurable objectives that the program will seek to influence.

FIGURE 1—PRECEDE-PROCEED Model Framework

# PRECEDE-PROCEED Framework



As demonstrated in the model, it is important to first identify the desired outcome of the program that is to be implemented across the given employee population. This will help to determine the focus that should be placed through the implementation of the wellness program. In this case, the focus of the program will be to increase physical activity among employees at the targeted organization. Given the information gleaned in the review of the literature, it is known that programs with a narrower focus are inclined to have more significant results. Additionally, there were also a strong number of programming examples that were uncovered in the literature review that could be utilized in a wellness program that specifically targets this objective of increasing physical activity. As identified in the research, utilizing a wide range of techniques to target a specific objective can serve to increase participation by

offering a variety of opportunities for engagement. Finally, given the costs identified with the programming techniques explored, there are a wide variety of programming examples to utilize towards this objective that are also low cost to initiate. When implementing a new program, it can be helpful to monitor the budget closely to ensure that a return on investment is likely before significant funding is allocated. Once the results are determined from the physical fitness component of a wellness program, it could allow for additional opportunities to expand upon the program in future years.

Increasing physical activity among employees is seen as a viable program objective in employee wellness programs, as low physical fitness levels are also a clear risk factor for many premature deaths as recognized in the MMWR results indicated in an earlier section (Yoon, 2014). As explored, increasing physical fitness levels is a proven method of reducing risk of heart disease, cancer, chronic respiratory disease, stroke, and even unintentional injuries. In short, the goal to increase physical fitness levels among employees is specific, measurable, and a realistic place to start when launching a brand new employee wellness program.

In step two of the PRECEDE-PROCEED model, it is important to identify and set priorities among health or community issues and their behavioral and environmental determinants that stand in the way of achieving that result. This involves identifying the behaviors, lifestyles, and/or environmental factors that affect those issues or conditions. It is important that these behaviors and environmental factors are identified so that solutions can be generated that will best address the issues and barriers at hand.

Within the context of the workplace in question, some of these behaviors and environmental factors include the fact that given the sedentary nature of many roles within the

organization, most employees are in positions that are not inherently designed to offer them many opportunities for physical activity throughout the workday. Rather, many positions require extended periods of time sitting and working in a desk/office environment that does not offer opportunities for extended movement. Additionally, given the geographic locations of the facilities, many employees are required to drive to work, rather than walk or bike, which only increases the sedentary lifestyle. Moreover, lengthy commutes can serve to demotivate employees from engaging in physical fitness activities as it reduces time available to them for personal priorities both before and after work throughout the workweek. Increasing programming around this topic during working hours will provide opportunities for physical activity that might not have previously existed for many employees. Additionally, given the property on which the company facilities are located and their surrounding geographic locations, there are many inherent environmental opportunities that exist to build programming around this topic of increasing physical fitness levels, such as designated walking paths for independent or group walking clubs.

Step three of the PRECEDE-PROCEED model involves the identification process of the predisposing, enabling, or reinforcing factors that can affect the behaviors and environmental factors identified in step two. For instance, if there isn't access to a stairwell, employees may be required to take the elevator rather than use the stairs to increase physical fitness levels throughout the day. This step is important, as it identifies variables and other barriers that could be inhibiting behaviors that would otherwise yield a more positive outcome.

Within the context of the employee wellness program in question, some of these predisposing and enabling factors include environmental concerns such as the availability of

stairwells that offer convenient access to our buildings and the use of proper lighting and signage to promote available on-site walking areas. Additionally, there are other organizational barriers that exist, as the company culture is currently one that fosters an expectation of productivity and strong, focused work among employees during regular business hours. With this in mind, employees are not currently encouraged to prioritize opportunities to engage in physical activities throughout the workday, and in fact, many employees would probably think that their managers would likely discourage their participation in such activities. Employees provided feedback in prior employee engagement surveys that the company culture encourages focused production of work related goals during business hours and that employees believe they would be discouraged from participating in activities at work that are not related to the specific goals and objectives of their company roles. Many thought their managers would discourage their participation in physical fitness activities throughout the day, stating that they thought they would see this as a distraction from their work. Fostering this sort of culture can encourage long working hours and could reduce the likelihood that employees would independently take time during their workday to engage in opportunities for physical activities that might be available to them. Given feedback from prior engagement surveys, it is clear that employees are eager to engage in opportunities at work that might improve various aspects of their overall health, but they are not currently sure these activities are supported by members of management. In looking at the research, this topic was explored in the Racette et al. study (2009), which indicated the importance of having members of leadership at the forefront of group programming to encourage participation of employees and to reinforce that the programming is supported by senior leadership.

Finally, in step four of the PRECEDE-PROCEED model, the administrative and policy factors are identified that can influence what can be implemented. This is important, as it helps to create framework around what changes or interventions might be possible within the context of a given organization. This can relate to environmental factors, or bureaucratic and administrative factors that can affect the ability to makes progress on influencing a specific behavior or topic. Within the context of the program in question, it is worth noting that the company has struggled with profitability in recent years and that strong controls have been implemented in regards to spending. With that in mind, while there is support of the program by key stakeholders in the company, it is also apparent that the program will need to be implemented without significant start-up costs associated with it. As referenced, many of the recommended programming techniques explored in the literature that focus specifically on increasing physical activity levels among employees do not have significant costs associated with them. This is especially true when exploring the variety of techniques that align within the behavioral structure and approach.

Another policy worth considering is that the organization in question has a strict non-remote work policy, meaning that employees are required to complete work from the office each day and that working remotely or working from home is only permitted in rare, emergency instances. Additionally, travel among employees for work also only occurs in rare instances and there are tight controls in place around approval for work-related travel. Knowing information such as this can influence the approach taken when implementing a program, as initiatives can be launched that reach the targeted population at the work offices during working hours, since it is known that the population can generally be reached at this

location and during this time. As stated in the literature, many of the programming techniques seen in previous utilized programs specifically bring programming to employees at their place of employment during business hours. With that in mind, there are a variety of examples offered from the literature that could be applied to the program being developed here.

In exploring the parameters of this particular organization, it is understood that the program implemented will need to be inexpensive to be approved by the senior leadership team. Additionally, while it might be effective to target activities that reach employees while they are at the office during regular business hours, it will also be necessary to ensure that there is adequate support from members of management so that employees know they are encouraged to participate in the initiatives that are rolled out. In order to obtain buy-in from managers, it may also be necessary to conduct trainings with them to demonstrate how engagement in the programming may lead to happier, healthier, and more productive employees. If employees know that managers support their participation in activities, they may be more inclined to participate. Finally, given what is known about the culture of the organization, while support from managers on programming that takes place during the business day hours is helpful, it will also be important to recognize the current mindset that exists within the organization in regards to a culture that fosters focused work in an environment without distractions. With this in mind, it will be helpful to initiate programming that would provide specific and structured opportunities to increase the physical fitness levels of employees during specific work hours so that managers can better plan for brief absences on their team as employees participate in activities.

Given that structured programming has been validated through the studies explored as an effective approach in generating initiatives related to employee wellness, this approach may serve as a useful tool to both address concerns and hesitations from within the organization in question and to increase the effectiveness of the actual program that is ultimately implemented. As seen in exploring previously established programs, creating a multi-pronged program that offers a variety of approaches in reaching a desired population generally provides greater opportunities for engagement and ultimately, can increase the overall likelihood of success of the program in reaching an intended goal. With that in mind, the approach outlined here for the business in question would certainly follow that guidance, as it would seek to implement a variety of programming opportunities across a wide range of methods to increase the likelihood of success of the overall program.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **Results**

The following chapter presents the proposed worksite wellness program. Based on the review of scientific literature and the application of the PRECEDE model to the current context of the worksite wellness setting being targeted, the following proposes a multi-strategy program that addresses health and wellness among a network of employees.

#### **Proposed Program Curriculum**

Given what was learned in the PRECEDE model for this program outlined above and through exploring programming utilized in other previously established programs that have also sought to increase physical activity levels across employee populations, below is a proposed program curriculum for an employee wellness program at the employer in question that would increase physical activity levels among employees. A logic model in Figure 2 is also included to visual highlight the inputs, outputs, and assumptions associated with the proposed programming.

#### **Laying the foundation and getting buy-in:**

##### *1. Buy-in from employees:*

- Bring in a specialist who offers biometric screenings and/or health assessments, and who can provide educational information on improving health outcomes through increased physical activity. Use biometric screening data to both

encourage participation from employees but also to monitor the effectiveness of the program after one year.

- Start a wellness committee to invite employees to join the planning and execution efforts of wellness related programming. This committee can also assist with recruitment efforts as needed.
- Hold optional lunch-and-learn sessions for employees to learn about health benefits related to increased physical activity levels.

2. *Buy-in from managers:*

- Hold optional lunch-and-learn sessions for managers to learn about health benefits related to increased physical activity levels and share data related to employee productivity, engagement, turnover, reduction in missed work days, etc.
- Ask members of senior leadership team to express support for the program. Ask them to request support from managers to allow their employees to participate in initiatives.

**GOAL #1: To provide opportunities to allow employees to engage in 30 minutes a day of physical fitness activity during work hours.**

*Proposed Interventions:*

- Start a walking club at work to increase participation in mid-day walks around the office and/or surrounding area. Create sign-up sheets and assign a peer group leader to send a meeting invite to the group and to champion attendance daily. Hold meetings with

the group leaders to suggest routes, share best practices, track attendance, and obtain feedback on the effectiveness of the program.

- Create a stairwell (“Stair Well”) based climbing competition to encourage employees to take the stairs while at work. Ensure stairwells are accessible and well-lit. Add motivational posters to the stairwells to make them more attractive. Hold a kick-off meeting and ask employees to commit to a stair-related goal. Provide trackers to employees and hold weekly meetings to monitor results. Offer incentives such as small prizes for the individuals that log the most stairs over a given period of time.
- Offer on-site yoga classes once a week during lunch to relieve stress and encourage mobility of employees. Identify employees that have a background in yoga and ask them to lead the session. Work with that person to create a yoga program appropriate for work and reserve a large conference room to conduct the sessions once a week. Encourage employee sign-up and offer incentives for individuals that attend the most sessions over the year period. Provide incentives to the yoga instructor if possible.

**GOAL #2: To provide educational resources that inform employees on the importance of increased physical activity.**

*Proposed Interventions:*

- Create an office fitness library, offering exercise-related books, videos, equipment, and brochures that can be borrowed and shared among employees. Ask for donations of these materials or purchase them inexpensively at second-hand stores. Log materials and track the sign-out process to ensure materials are returned for future users.

- Hold a health fair and invite local vendors to the office to discuss physical fitness activities that may be available both at work and in the surrounding community. Invite nearby gyms and ask them to provide membership discounts to employees.
- Create a bi-weekly newsletter discussing relevant health promotion topics that highlights fitness-related content and shares information on upcoming company physical activity events.
- Post physical fitness themed bulletin boards in strategic areas.
- Start an employee sports team or league to increase employee engagement and encourage physical activity after work. Conduct a short survey to learn what type of team (or teams) have the greatest interest among employees and sponsor an employee team in kickball, soccer, softball, etc. If enough interest, build entire league for the organization. If only moderate interest to start, inquire about joining an existing community league through sponsoring a company team.

### **Incentives**

As recommended by the literature, the use of incentives will be used to encourage participation in the wellness program. A similar approach will be taken to that which was utilized in the Racette et al. (2009) study, where participation in program related events are tracked among employees. At the beginning of the program, employees will obtain a “participation punch card” in which they receive one “punch” or type of credit for each event that they participate in. For every 10 punches that an employee receives, he or she will be eligible to receive an incentive prize. These prizes will be nominal in value, but will help to further support fitness goals. Prizes will include items such as water bottles, jump

ropes, and sweat bands. Offering incentives have been a proven method to increase participation among employees in the wellness programming.

FIGURE 2—Wellness Program to Increase Physical Activity Logic Model – Precede Portion

**Employee Wellness Program to Increase Physical Activity Logic Model – Precede Portion**

**Situation:** Employee wellness program to focus on increasing physical activity levels of employees both inside of working hours and outside of work.

Inputs	Outputs	
	Activities	Participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Reserved rooms or space at work where the planned activities can occur</li> <li>-Presenters to provide information throughout the program, including leading lunch</li> <li>-Peer leaders to lead various activities</li> <li>-Employees to engage in planned activities</li> <li>-Tracking tools and resources to provide to employees so that outputs towards goals can be measured.</li> <li>-Vendors to attend an employee health fair.</li> <li>-Biometric services company that can provide health assessments and biometrics data to employees. (Potential cost for this)</li> <li>-Limited funding to subsidize the incentive rewards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Lunch and learn meetings</li> <li>-Establishment on-site of walking clubs</li> <li>-Stairwell climbing challenges</li> <li>-Weekly on-site yoga class</li> <li>-Local health fair with attendance from community vendors</li> <li>-Sponsorship of an employee sports league</li> <li>-Content to be posted on bulletin boards and disseminated through newsletters</li> <li>-Creation of an office fitness library</li> <li>-Creation of an employee wellness committee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-employees at a mid-sized logistics company</li> <li>-members of management</li> </ul>

Assumptions
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That the activities outlined will undoubtedly appeal to employees</li> <li>2. That employees will engage in the programming established</li> </ol>

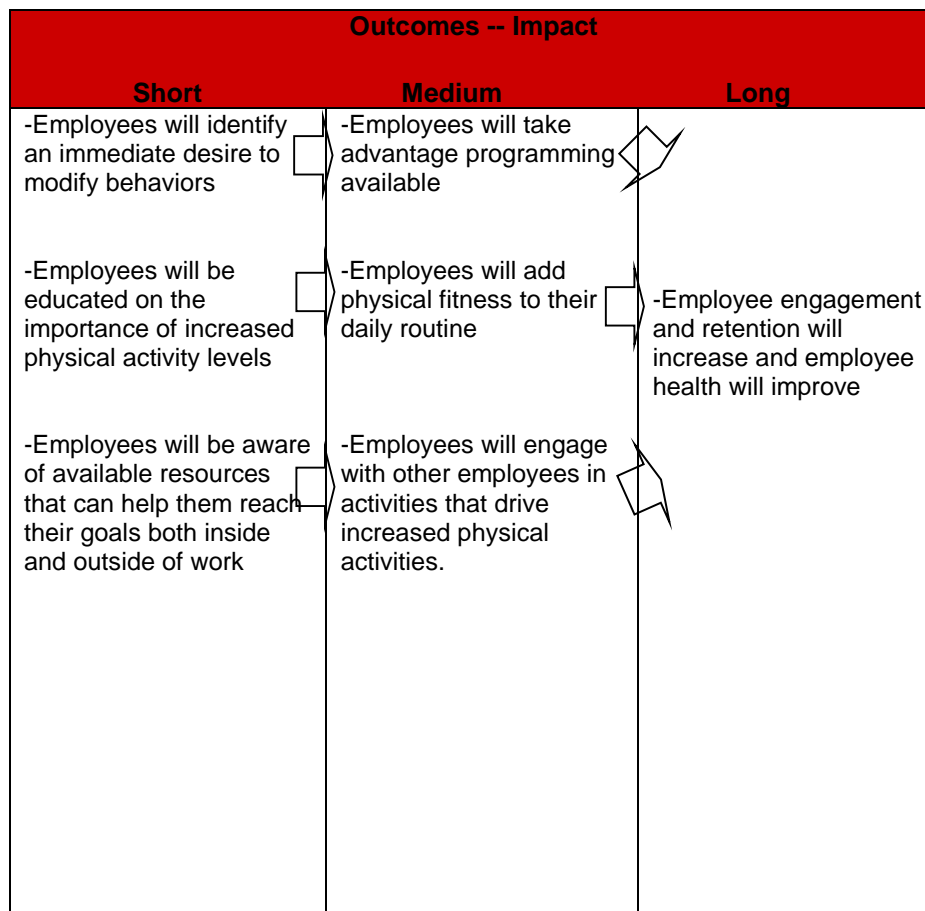
## **CHAPTER 5**

### **Discussion**

Given the proposed content focus, structure, and organization of the proposed worksite wellness program, following the Proceed model steps will ensure a comprehensive evaluation of the program's immediate impacts and long-term outcomes over time. A logic model containing the Proceed portion of the intervention is included in Figure 3 to review the intended short, medium, and long term goals of the program. It is important that these goals are identified so that an evaluation process can be implemented to determine if these specific objectives are met through the initiatives implemented in the program.

FIGURE 3—Wellness Program to Increase Physical Activity Logic Model – Proceed Portion

**Employee Wellness Program to Increase Physical Activity Logic Model – Proceed Portion**



**Evaluating Success of the Program**

As mentioned, it is important that the program is reviewed after it is implemented to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention strategies utilized in the execution of the program. This review can occur among program leaders, champions, planning committee members, and other key stakeholders. Specific examples of criteria that can be used in the evaluation process include program participation and the impact of the programming to ensure that it is effective in meeting the intended goals of the program. While participation can be evaluated using tracking tools, it is important to set a specific goal to help measure the actual

performance against. For example, the goal might seek to have 70% of employees participate in at least 5 wellness program activities over the course of the first year of the program. Setting a specific goal for the program impact is also important, but to measure this, it will be necessary to establish baseline standards to compare against. One method for this could be to release a participant survey to employees at the beginning of the program to capture self-reported data as to how often employees are engaging in physical activity during business hours. This will help to establish a pre-program baseline standard which can then be used to compare against post-program results. Additional follow-up surveys can be rolled out to program participants after six months and one year of programming to capture this data. Similar to the survey, participants should have access throughout the program to an anonymous drop-box where they can provide both positive and constructive feedback on the program. To ensure convenience to the participants, access to provide feedback should be available both digitally and physically to accommodate various preferences. Capturing this type of information can not only serve to improve the program, but can also remind participants that this is a priority for the organization and that the leadership team is invested in the success of the program.

Setting clear goals and using data to measure the effectiveness of the program is important in order to validate the efficacy of the programming implemented. Additionally, as the program effectiveness is evaluated, this data could be useful in getting further support of this type of programming from members of senior leadership and other key stakeholders. The results of this support can be hugely significant, as it can help to show the value of the employee wellness program and may allow for additional budgeting to be allocated for these types of initiatives in the future. The impact of this could prove highly significant, as it could

help to determine if expansion of the program into other focused health objectives is a viable option that might yield an even greater impact on employee wellness.

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