



## North Carolina School for the Deaf: Getting Started with Evaluation

### Organization Background

The North Carolina School for the Deaf is a state-supported school in Morganton, North Carolina which provides both residential and day opportunities for deaf and hard of hearing students. The School has 140 employees across three shifts and serves approximately 80 students, one-third of whom are residential, throughout both the school year and summer programs.

### Wellness Data Collection

In October of 2012 The North Carolina School for the Deaf began working with Prevention Partners to improve employee wellness. On their first Prevention Partners report card, the school received all D's and F's. Over the next two years, the North Carolina School for the Deaf worked hard to cultivate a culture of workplace health. In February 2015, they achieved Prevention Partners' Excellence Recognition by earning straight A's in the areas of nutrition, physical activity, tobacco-free, and culture of wellness.

Throughout their wellness transformation, the NC School for the Deaf collected data on their progress. With no current wellness budget, the school faced a monetary barrier and had to be creative in their data collection. They involved the Wellness Committee, the Administrative Management Team, the Health and Safety Committee, and the NC State Health Plan in the process.

### Goal: 100%

With limited access to quantitative data from their health insurance plan, the North Carolina School for the Deaf instead collected data on employee participation and opportunities. Their goals were to reach 100% employee participation and 100% opportunity or access for employees in the following areas:

- 100% of refreshments at staff events followed reduced sugar goals
- 100% of director led All Staff meetings included 15 minutes of group exercise
- 100% access to healthy meal options
- 100% access to wellness center
- 100% opportunity for staff to complete a confidential health survey incentivized by reduced health insurance premiums

The North Carolina School for the Deaf also found other cost-effective ways to evaluate their wellness program success. They measured wellness program membership, wellness program participation, and overall employee attendance. They maintained a sign-in sheet at their fitness room to track employee use, followed staff donation of wellness equipment, and monitored membership on the Wellness Committee. They also tracked employee attendance and use of leave without pay.



*North Carolina School for the Deaf employees take advantage of their 100% opportunity to use the fitness room*



## Sharing Results

Through their data collection, the North Carolina School for the Deaf was able to see some of the effects that focusing on workplace wellness had on their employees. These qualitative and quantitative outcomes included:

- Reached 100% participation and 100% opportunity for employees to take part in a culture of health
- Increased use of the fitness room
- A maintained interest in the fitness room through regular donation of equipment
- Increased membership and diversity on the Wellness Committee
- Increased overall employee attendance
- Reduced the number of leave without pay incidents to zero
- More positive, energetic employees and an increased engagement in work

## Putting the Results to Work

These wellness results are presented by the Wellness Committee at Managers' Meetings, which helps the school maintain a positive attitude towards wellness and adds to leadership values. Their excellent wellness outcomes helped the North Carolina School for the Deaf receive widespread recognition for their work in workplace health. The school was featured in both the State Health Plan newsletter and in Sync, a North Carolina Department of Commerce publication. Along with their awards from Prevention Partners, the North Carolina School for the Deaf Wellness Committee received recognition for their success from the NCSD Advisory Council.

## Future Plans

The North Carolina School for the Deaf recognizes the importance of continued data collection, and hopes to expand their evaluation efforts. The school plans to implement quarterly employee surveys covering all four areas of workplace health: fitness, nutrition, wellness culture, and tobacco. In addition to their current sign-in sheet at the fitness room, the North Carolina School for the Deaf plans to have sign-in sheets at all wellness activities in order to better evaluate employee participation. Lastly, the school hopes to work with the state health plan to start incorporating more quantitative data into their evaluation work. The North Carolina School for the Deaf has received overwhelming support and praise for their work, and looks forward to seeing continued positive outcomes as they encourage healthier lifestyles among students, employees, and the greater community.

“With the knowledge that Burke County is 77<sup>th</sup> out of 100 North Carolina counties in health and wellness, we value wellness and want to encourage growth as a school for the Deaf, individually and as a community leader. We strive to educate our staff, increase understanding of State Health Plan benefits while improving wellness culture in the workplace. Our goal is to encourage healthier lifestyles for our students, employees, and community. “

-Audrey Garvin, Ed.D, School Director