

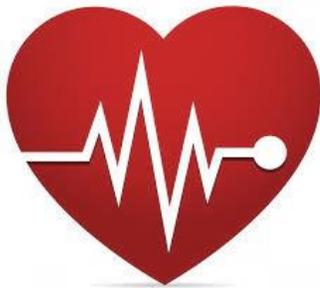


Partners in Learning – Salisbury, NC The Process of Evaluating Employee Health Outcomes

Evaluating the impact of worksite wellness initiatives may seem daunting, but businesses large and small can gather and analyze information that can provide feedback about their efforts. Having trouble getting started? Follow the steps taken by Partners in Learning, a nonprofit early childcare center in Salisbury, North Carolina, to develop a process for measuring and reporting the impact of their wellness programs on employee health outcomes over the past two years.

Collecting

After connecting with Prevention Partners and WorkHealthy America to develop Partners in Learning's worksite wellness programs, David Freeze, Partners in Learning's wellness coordinator, began exploring opportunities to measure employee health outcomes. David first reached out to the wellness coordinator and marketing director at the local hospital, with whom he had previously established a working relationship.



David arranged for the wellness coordinator, a registered nurse, to provide a free heart risk assessment at Partners in Learning. This included testing of basic biometric markers like weight, blood pressure, and blood sugar and documentation of smoking status and heart risk factors. Appointments at the hospital were offered to those whose schedules would not permit on-site testing, and two staff chose to complete the screening with their family physicians. All staff voluntarily completed the baseline assessment with no incentive. "It was an additional part of our wellness program, and employees knew they could get this information without paying for it. And, of course, Partners made time for them to do it," said David. These in-depth assessments through the hospital are completed yearly.

As a follow-up to this yearly health screening, David checks in with each of Partners in Learning's 43 employees on a quarterly basis. David spends two to three weeks collecting health measurements from all employees at appointments at the beginning of each quarter and discussing any changes. Each appointment takes 20-25 minutes per employee. During this time, David checks blood pressure, weight, resting pulse, elevated pulse after a step test, and BMI. Blood sugar is added once a year as part of the full health assessment. David also goes over the employee's personal wellness development plan. This plan is an outline of short and long-term fitness and personal goals that each new employee develops during an initial appointment with David after first joining the organization.

If any health measurements—typically blood pressure or blood sugar—are identified as within an at-risk range, David will monitor these indicators more closely or recommend further testing and refer the employee to his or her family doctor as needed. David also provides handouts tailored to the individual's needs and goals. For staff members who have stayed employed with Partners in Learning, David can provide an individual with information about his or her personal health history over the past eight quarters upon request.

Compiling

Following quarterly health check-ins, David dedicates some additional time to compiling the data. David has an Excel spreadsheet with a line for each employee, so it is easy to add in further information and calculate overall results. Compiling and analyzing the data has become easier over time as David has refined his process for recording the data.



David prepares a basic cumulative report with information like this:

40 staff members participated in wellness testing. Of those who participated:

Weight

- 7 gained weight, 3 maintained weight, 30 lost weight
- Total weight loss for the quarter: 109 pounds
- Average weight loss: 2.73 pounds

BMI

- BMI above 30 (obese): 14, down 2 from last quarter

Blood Pressure

- Blood pressure above 140/90 (hypertension range): 7, up from 6 last quarter

Blood Sugar

- Blood sugars pre-diabetic or diabetic: 8, same as last year

“ Everybody was excited to have the opportunity to have the testing done. ”

-Deborah Howell, assistant director

Communicating

David shares the cumulative results of the wellness testing with the wellness committee each quarter. A report from the wellness committee, including any updated health outcomes data, is provided to the board of directors on a monthly basis. One of the board members is also a wellness committee member, and Partners in Learning's assistant director Deborah Howell is also available at these meetings to answer questions. "They've been really pleased with our overall efforts," Deborah commented. "The board is supportive of all the changes we have made for staff and children."

What's next? Partners in Learning recognizes that opportunities for evaluation can continue to grow. Employees are currently provided a \$200 wellness bonus to cover the costs of health insurance or other personal wellness initiatives and could be surveyed to see how this benefit is being used. Partners in Learning may also consider tracking the reasons for staff absences to identify the number of personal sick days.

Tracking employee health outcomes has helped Partners in Learning to apply for grants from local agencies for wellness and provided justification for wellness funding in the organization's operational budget. Partners in Learning also shares information with community members and agencies to promote the organization. "We are getting the word out about Partners in Learning and how we are setting the stage in the community for wellness and healthy lifestyle changes for staff," said Deborah.

Tips for Your Organization

- Explore partnerships with a local health department or hospital to gather employee biometrics
- Starting a system for evaluation can be rocky at first but will become smoother as you repeat the process and data collection becomes the norm
- Use your data to identify both successes and places for improvement, and share your results with both your wellness team and executive leadership