



CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL (CDC): CREATING A CULTURE OF HEALTH



Purpose of Project

The Health Enhancement Research Organization (HERO), in collaboration with workplace wellness experts, sought companies from a variety of industries and business types and sizes to participate in a case study project. These case studies focus on employers who developed and actively fostered a healthy culture in the workplace, one intentionally designed with elements and indicators that support employee health and well-being. HERO developed case studies based on their own **definition and elements** of a culture of health.¹

Company Overview

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) mission is “to keep Americans safe and healthy where they work, live and play.” CDC develops and applies evidence-based disease prevention and control, environmental health and health promotion and education activities designed to improve the health of Americans and people in other nations. CDC, an Operating Division of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), is the nation’s premiere health promotion, disease prevention and emergency preparedness agency. Scientists, health promotion professionals and disease detectives track diseases and outbreaks, respond to emergencies and apply health promotion activities to strengthen America’s health and resiliency.

Headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia, CDC has more than 20,000 staff with facilities in 10 additional locations in the United States and field staff in all 50 states and more than 50 countries.

Program Background

CDC’s Office of Safety, Security, and Asset Management’s (OSSAM) WorkLife Wellness Office (WVO) provides health promotion activities and facilities to improve the health of the CDC workforce. These activities include health-enhancing campus offerings, amenities, policies, systems, social supports in the workplace and individual lifestyle consultation for health, behavioral and emotional well-being.

WVO approaches wellness and well-being comprehensively by including many of the best practice elements:

- Walkable campus environments with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) certified routes and trails
- Wellness liaisons — employee volunteers to promote and drive interest in wellness within their workplace
- Annual health assessments, biometric screening and flu shots at all campuses
- Health coaching — telephonic and in-person
- Fitness centers with on-site fitness management, services and seminars

- On-site employee assistance counselors and support groups
- On-site clinicians and dietician
- Three annual CDC-wide campaigns/challenges to encourage staff to set goals and practice healthy behaviors
- Foodservice facility and vending management
- Alternative work schedule, flexible schedule and employee wellness policy

Culture of Health (CoH) Elements

The WWO strategy concentrates on many aspects of staff well-being, including physical, social, financial and community well-being. The following elements of a culture of health highlights this successful program.



Executive and Organizational Leadership

In 2016, CDC instituted the CDC Health and Well-being Council comprised of leadership from all CDC Centers, Institutes, and Offices (CIOs). This group meets regularly and is committed to ensuring quality of life at work and fostering staff resilience, health and safety to help achieve the overall CDC mission. Leadership focuses on four key goals in creating a healthy organization:

- Recruit, retain and support skilled staff and a diverse workforce
- Enhance supervisory skills across CDC
- Continuously recognize staff performance, contributions and achievement
- Improve CDC communication to maintain high staff morale and involvement

CDC also has supportive leaders who model healthy lifestyle behaviors, and their participation helps build trust within the organization. The annual Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey shows high numbers for supervisor support for wellness and awareness within the employee population. A CDC internal report includes aggregate health appraisal data about employees' health status and behaviors across the agency. The profile will highlight key leadership metrics and further involve leaders in supporting

employee health at a unit and organizational level.

Shared Vision and Mission

The WWO works internally with staff across the agency to expand the reach of its wellness programming.

Partnerships with subject matter experts in disease

prevention programs share science and best practices to develop and promote to CDC's workforce. WWO partners with business offices such as the Human Resources Office, Occupational Health and Safety Office, and Quality and Sustainability Office to conduct CDC-wide events such as Safety Month, Earth Week Expo, and health benefits and readiness fairs. The CDC partnership group meets biannually and maintains an agency-wide calendar to coordinate promotions to staff. WWO collaborates with agency employee organizations to increase social and spiritual support for agency staff through charitable events and gatherings that promote mental and physical health. WWO liaises with the Human Resources Office for insurance provider wellness benefits and incentives provided through the Federal Employee Health Benefit plans as an effort to increase employee awareness and utilization for employees and families.

Supportive Built Environment

CDC designed campus environments with the following elements to promote and meet various employee wellness needs:

- Spaces for stress management
 - A memorial area for CDC lives lost
 - Quiet areas for reflection and meditation
 - Landscaped pathways to promote walking
 - Water features and fountains
 - Outdoor seating areas for lunch or meetings
- Community garden
- Natural light-filled stairs and signage to encourage stair use
- Sit-stand desks and community walking workstations
- Private lactation rooms with refrigerators
- On-site occupational health clinics
- Access to exercise inside and outside of the buildings
 - Free fitness centers
 - Walking path with fitness stops
 - Volleyball courts and sports field for softball, soccer and kickball
 - Covered bike parking and racks with bike repair kits
- Indoor and outdoor ADA-certified walking routes
- Intramural sports such as kickball, volleyball and softball



Training and Learning

WWO offers a variety of training and learning opportunities to help staff improve their skills and make healthier lifestyle choices, including:

- Multi-week courses, support groups and seminars on diabetes, stress and weight management

- Basic Life Support, AED and first-aid certification, free of charge
- Health coaching and nutrition consultations on-site, online and by telephone
- Access to monthly educational and skill building topics: deep breathing and diaphragmatic breathing, meditation, proper nutrition, reading food labels, grocery store tours, goal setting, stretching at desk and ergonomic tips
- Online courses, counseling and referrals on work-life

balance and health promotion topics, available 24/7

- Educational toolkits to support family members (e.g., toolkits for childcare and parenting, college planning, eldercare support and placement assistance)

Leadership also has the option to build skills in how to manage, with a focus on well-being. Leading Well is a new supervisor training opportunity that includes an overview of the business case of wellness, leadership versus management styles, wellness policy, wellness strategies, and visioning and goal setting. Leaders report back on their experience after eight weeks on the goal they implemented. Course evaluations generate feedback regarding additional topics supervisors would like to learn and other helpful strategies.

Policies & Procedures

As a federal agency, CDC uses and expands upon existing HHS policies and guidance documents to support staff health and well-being. These include aspects of workplace health, such as tobacco-free campuses, alternative work schedules and nutrition guidelines for cafeterias and vending. Some of the more notable policies include:

- CDC wellness policy: encourages flexibility in staff schedules to meet well-being needs. Staff work with their supervisor to schedule wellness activities to improve morale, overall health, readiness and performance.
- Telework and alternative work schedule policies: includes flexible arrival and departure times as well as compressed schedules.
- Dietary and healthy meeting policies: directs facilities to offer healthy food in vending machines, cafeterias, and cafés.
- Lactation support policy: provides staff access to breastfeeding classes, breast pumps, lactation rooms, consultation, and support groups.
- Workplace violence prevention policy (includes anti-bullying): updated policy to include definition and description of bullying behavior and mechanism to begin reporting.



Peer Support and Employee Involvement

CDC offers involvement opportunities in creating and cultivating the organization’s culture of health. For example, staff participate in annual feedback surveys and are encouraged to participate in workforce development subcommittees to generate suggestions to raise low survey scores.

Staff participates in retreats to discuss issues, develop recommendations, and create strategic and risk-management plans. CDC reinforces the hard work that goes into these planning sessions by providing awards for cost-saving or “good ideas” applied throughout the organization.

WVO encourages CDC staff to help improve peer wellness. A peer leader network gives a qualified CDC staff member the opportunity to teach wellness classes such as yoga or boot camp. WVO recognizes peer leaders annually for their involvement.

CDC CIO wellness liaisons have initiated and spread ideas to the greater employee base, resulting in wellness scavenger hunts and races. Peers provide channels for quick communication and instant feedback.

Staff also communicate about WVO programs and recognize the creative wellness work of their peers. On the CDC Connects web site, peers post events and activities and they detail inspirational stories of their colleagues’ achievements.

Traditions and Symbols

WVO’s success has a large on-the-ground presence through marketing and promotions. WVO has developed a twelve-month calendar that highlights the “seasons” of wellness as well as behavior change cycles that serve to provide a broad umbrella to allow for partnerships and multiple focus areas under one theme. Each campaign includes elements of setting healthier lifestyle goals, environmental supports, social support, information, education and leadership. Cycles occur within a two to three month timeframe allowing for sufficient planning, implementation, awards, and evaluation. To involve a large number of CDC staff, WVO plans three agency-wide campaigns as “seasons” each year.

- The fall campaign “Health Days — Know Your Numbers” raises awareness of staff health status through health appraisals and biometric screenings. Staff can receive support during the holidays in addition to their baseline health status report.

- The new year/winter campaign begins the “Get Connected” Tour in which WWO hosts open houses in fitness centers and offers information about the Employee Assistance Program. Staff is encouraged to join a fitness center and register for fitness evaluations, coaching or counseling to help them achieve wellness goals using health appraisal/ screening information.



- CDC hosts the spring/summer agency-wide campaign called the “Healthiest CIO Challenge” and encourages physical, nutritional and mental health goals, and it includes a “Culture Challenge” for Centers, Institutes, and Offices. CIOs earn additional points for social or policy support efforts for their work units. The capstone of the challenge is a ceremony to award the “Healthiest CIO” based on participation points as well as team engagement and recruitment, individual high-scorers, and leaders. Ongoing, year-round marketing includes a monthly “What’s Happening” and a “Healthy Bites” flyer for foodservice specials on healthier offerings.

Each of the campaigns uses email, informational handouts, links and referrals to resources and on-the-ground events that include biometric screenings, 5K run/walks, scavenger hunts, cooking demos, vendor fairs and expos.

CDC’s constant on-the-ground presence and marketing in the workplace show staff the importance of taking care of their health. Through these campaigns, thousands of CDC staff know their weight and health metrics and can connect with specific services that can positively affect those metrics.

Reward and Recognition

The HealthLead Alliance recognized CDC in 2015 with the HealthLead Bronze Level Accreditation for CDC’s culture of health workplace design. CDC also gives awards and recognition to its own employees for advancing and improving

wellness and well-being at CDC.

As part of CDC’s Annual Honor Awards Ceremony, there is a category for “Excellence in Workplace Wellness.” This ceremony is the forum for giving CDC’s most prestigious scientific and operational awards. This award receives nominations from across the 15 CIOs, and selects one nominee. This annual award is a way for CDC to show staff that they support a culture of wellness in the workplace.

WWO presents the CIO Culture Awards (bronze, silver, gold) annually as part of the agency’s Healthiest CIO Challenge. These awards highlight efforts to improve the wellness culture of the organization.

CDC has scored above average on national benchmarks such as the HERO Health and Well-being Best Practices Scorecard in Collaboration with Mercer© (HERO Scorecard) and the Office of Personnel Management’s WellCheck when compared with other large worksites. In 2016, CDC scored 80% for the HERO

Scorecard and 96% for WellCheck.

Key Results

Since 2012, CDC has seen an increase in wellness activities participation and health improvement because of the organization's comprehensive focus on wellness.

According to the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, participation in Work/Life programs increased from 36% to 42% in 2017. In addition, satisfaction for agency health and wellness programs improved from 91% to 92%. Moreover, supervisor support for balancing work and other life issues increased from 84% to 88%.

There has been a 4% increase in participant reach overall, from 17,428 in 2014 to 18,155 in 2017. The spring/summer Healthiest CIO Challenge campaign has been the most popular with staff, with more than 4,000 people registering and 3,000 completing the six-week challenge each year. The Challenge requires at least 150 minutes of physical activity per week. During this Challenge CIOs also showed leadership support by organizing recreational outings and other special on-site events.

WWO created the "Culture Challenge" with bronze, silver, and gold levels for CIOs to achieve. Nine gold winners had at least one CIO-specific wellness event, instituted a wellness committee or local policy, and had at least 50% of staff participating in the challenge.

Regarding health improvement, comparing un-matched demographically similar groups yielded a decrease of 3% in those participants who were at elevated risk for higher than recommended total cholesterol (drop



from 41% to 38%). The same cohorts of those at risk for glucose measurements decreased from 26% to 15%. Feedback given by participants emphasized the increased awareness and subsequent follow-up with their primary care providers.

Finally, 80% to 93% of staff who completed the health appraisals reported good or excellent health status. In 2016, 65% of staff were in the low-risk category with only 11% in the high-risk category. These results show that CDC is in the ideal range for employers, according to research published in the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, with 60% of staff or more in the low-risk category and no more than 15% in the high-risk category.²

CDC Health Status Change

Risk Category	2013/2014	2015/2016
Low (0-2- Risks)	45%	65%
Moderate (3-4 Risks)	32%	24%
High (>5 Risks)	23%	11%

Lessons Learned

CDC's WorkLife Wellness Office learned early on to align their health promotion program strategy with organizational goals and to make sure the data collected and analyzed maps and aligns with program goals. WWO uses additional data such as benefits enrollment data to help determine program success and assist with future targets for action.

CDC used outside organizations such as the Alliance to Make U.S. Healthiest's "HealthLead," CDC's Workplace Health Scorecard, and OPM's WellCheck to benchmark

the WWO program. The Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey helped WWO better understand the work-life climate and needs of the employee base to improve the program.

Because of their large, diverse employee base in multiple geographic locations, CDC uses wellness liaisons and leaders within the CIO's to work with WWO as representatives for staff needs and interests. These liaisons allow WWO to support staff in a more focused and relevant way. They also provide staff a very convenient point of reference to make requests and share ideas.

WWO has found the branding and easy-to-remember email and web address very helpful to share with staff and promote as part of campaigns (intranet.cdc.gov/wellness and wellness@cdc.gov). Color-coded template flyers with branding offer easy recognition, efficiency and readability for staff reference.

An important best practice is to develop key relationships at the executive level for health promotion. CDC added this best practice to the strategy when it formed the CDC Health and Well-being Council to create agency-wide policies and help ensure success at all levels. Continuing to cultivate this

executive level council will be a key element in long-term program success.

Conclusion

CDC focuses on health and wellness. Its public mission is to develop and apply disease prevention, environmental health and health promotion, and education activities to improve the health of the people of the United States. CDC embraces this mission for its staff and the WorkLife Wellness Office (WWO), and received recognition in the industry.

To succeed in this mission, CDC carried out a comprehensive strategy involving leadership and staff involvement, a supportive built environment, programming focused on intervention and prevention, robust communications, and training. Program data shows the success of this strategy while yielding insight about how to improve the program to position itself for future success.

As Dr. Thomas R. Frieden, then CDC director said, "I would like us to not only be the greatest health organization in the world, but the healthiest one."



References

1. May J, Moseley, K., Terry PD. Developing Culture of Health Metrics That Really Matter to Companies and Communities Final Report. (2016). Health Enhancement Research Organization (HERO).
2. Musich S, McDonald T, Hirschland D, Edington DW.(2003). Examination of risk status transitions among active employees in a comprehensive worksite health promotion program. J Occup Environ Med. Apr;45(4):393-9.

Contributors to this Case Study

This case study is a product of the HERO Culture of Health (CoH) Study Committee and its Values of Culture Work Group. HERO created the CoH Study Committee to establish a widely accepted definition of a healthy culture to build consensus and understanding of its value when supporting the health and well-being of a population. HERO staff and members of the CoH Study Committee led case study interviews and development of this report. HERO would like to extend a special thank you to Desiree Brown, Mamie Mabery, Tina Lankford, Marilyn Wolff, Arezoo Risman, and Becky Rentz with the Centers for Disease Control, and Kirk Miller, with Laulima Government Solutions, LLC for additional support during the writing and editing process.

Contributors to the report are listed alphabetically below.

Betsey Banker, Ergotron
Anne Borish, Wespath Benefits and Investments
Will Clower, Mediterranean Wellness
Roshi Fisher, Lockton
**Jessica Grossmeier, HERO
Melissa Henrich, Hays Companies
Rebecca Kelly, Element Health Inc.
*Steve Kittleson, Optum
Ashley Kletke, Stryker
**Dyann Matson-Koffman, CDC
Kathy Meacham-Webb, Limeade
Karen Moseley, HERO
Dr. Lidia Nelkovski, Interactive Health
Mark Poindexter, Shell Oil Company
Stewart Sill, IBM Watson Health
**Emily Wolfe, HERO

* Case study author

** Case study reviewer/s

For more information please contact:
Marilyn Wolff, Health Scientist,
WorkLife Wellness Office
Office of Safety, Security, and Asset Management
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
(404) 639-2852

The Health Enhancement Research Organization (HERO)



is HERO is a national non-profit dedicated to identifying and sharing best practices in the field of workplace health and wellbeing that improves the health and well-being of workers, their spouses, dependents and retirees. HERO was established over 20 years ago and is a member driven organization where learning opportunities and research are led by committees. HERO's work focuses on sharing best practices, advocating for improvements in the field, and providing practical solutions for employers who share HERO's commitment to health and well-being for employees, families and communities.