

Kalamazoo Valley Community College Draws National Attention for its Wellness Program

Initiative in Brief

The Kalamazoo Valley Community College (KVCC) worksite wellness program has drawn the attention of the nation's leading public health institution, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). CDC site team members recently visited KVCC to learn about its Employee Wellness Program.

KVCC employees and spouses are eligible for a health risk appraisal that includes a wellness questionnaire, cholesterol screening, body-composition analysis, glucose measurement, and cardio-respiratory fitness assessments every six months. Each participant gets her/his own web page that contains personal health data, wellness goals, as well as links to wellness websites and the Hope Wellness Newsletter.

To help participants achieve their health goals, KVCC combines the twice-a-year screenings with access to an onsite fitness center; a policy allowing 60 minutes per week in wellness activities; drop-in exercise classes (e.g., pilates, yoga, aerobics, and core-strengthening); regularly scheduled wellness seminars; maps of walking routes indoors and outdoors; a dietary analysis program for drop-in use or one-on-one counseling; and an on-site staff member for individualized guidance. If participants accumulate enough wellness points, they can earn an additional paid day off each year.

Participation rates have increased in three years from 38 to 73 percent. In addition, KVCC insurance increases, previously around 19% annually, have dropped to 7% percent the last 2 years. Overall program outcome data indicates a reduction in obesity and cholesterol levels, while oxygen up-take fitness has significantly improved.

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Benefits

Noted benefits of the program are:

- Healthier lifestyles through wellness education and wellness interventions.
- A positive impact on employee well-being and morale.
- Reduced health-care costs to employees and the college.

"Our program at KVCC provides clear evidence that strong organizational leadership and a well-designed worksite wellness program are powerful tools to encourage and support healthy and productive employees."

***Jim Turcott
Director of the Student Commons
Kalamazoo Valley Community College***

Lessons Learned

1. Creating a culture of wellness is important to sustain the program.
2. Regular wellness assessments followed by establishing individual wellness goals is important.
3. Clear data to document improvements in important health risk indicators is crucial.

Risk Factor: Physical Activity, Nutrition, and Tobacco
Impact/Reach: 357 employees/ 211 spouses
Business/Sector: Education