

Benton Harbor Police Respond with Enthusiasm

Initiative in Brief

One of the first steps that the Benton Harbor Police Department took in implementing a worksite wellness program was to form a wellness committee. Its committee consisted of members from various areas of city government in an effort to expand the reach of the program. Employees were enthusiastic about having a wellness program, and this enthusiasm has contributed to the success of subsequent wellness activities.

To get things started, the wellness committee began with a blood pressure and glucose screening. "Some referrals to physicians and the *Heart Safe Program* came out of the screening. It personally helped me, after finding out that my blood pressure was elevated. I followed through with the *Heart Safe Program*, and I've been exercising, walking, and trying to cut back on sugar," said Patricia Allen. The screening was so successful that there are plans already in place to hold future screenings.

The wellness committee sent out emails and flyers to invite all city employees to attend educational programs, such as a diabetes seminar, a nutrition program, and a nutritional label reading class. Employees that participated in these educational programs received free passes to a local health club. "We are going to offer the seminars at other times in order to find a good time for most people. We might try after work or on weekends or even at a different facility to try and get more participation," said Allen.

The Department is making plans to convert a file room into a workout room. Employees are looking forward to the convenience that this will provide. The wellness committee sees the room as accomplishing a major wellness goal: increased opportunity for employees to be physically active.

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Benefits

Noted benefits of the program are:

- Employees taking a personal interest in their own health.
- Finding potential problems during screening an employees taking action on them.
- An increased awareness about healthy eating and the benefits of exercise.



Patricia Allen, Grant Program Specialist (left) and LaDonna Mingo, Executive Assistant, Community Partnership for Life Long Learning

Lessons Learned

- You have to keep trying different times of the day for scheduled programs.
- Listen to the employees; they have good ideas.
- Incentives are important to engage participants.

Cost: \$3,000

Risk Factor: Physical inactivity, nutrition, and other risk factors for chronic disease

Impact/Reach: 26 employees

Business/Sector: Police/community service