



# Lake Cumberland District Health Department Working on Wellness: Case Study



## Participating in CDC's Work@Health® Program

Before LCDHD participated in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Work@Health® program, it did not have a formal wellness plan or dedicated staff to promote worksite wellness. Its health education division held wellness challenges and distributed health education materials, but not regularly. Staff members also had access to online health risk assessments (HRAs) through the agency's state-provided insurance plan.

After receiving a grant in 2012 from the US Health Resources and Services Administration to set up a worksite wellness program at a local business, leaders at LCDHD wondered if it was time to practice what they preached and adopt a formal workplace wellness program for their own employees. When she heard about Work@Health® at a Kentucky Public Health meeting, Carol Huckelby, a grant writer and administrative assistant at LCDHD, and a colleague signed up to participate.

The [Work@Health®](#) Program is designed to teach employers how to improve the health of their workers (and workers' families) by using prevention and wellness strategies that focus on chronic health conditions. Well-designed, science-based, and comprehensive workplace wellness programs can improve the health of individuals and companies, lower health care costs, and increase worker productivity.

With training and effort, employers of all sizes and types can plan and implement a workplace health program. Employers can learn from the experiences of employers like LCDHD about how to plan strategies and anticipate implementation challenges.

Huckelby and her colleague attended the Work@Health® program's blended model training in Chicago, Illinois, in May 2014. After the training, participants received 6-10 months of technical assistance in the form of coaching, webinars,

and interactions with peers. Huckelby said that some of the most important things she and her colleague learned from the training were the value of a wellness committee; how to leverage existing resources in their health plan to enhance their worksite wellness program; and how to make the "business case" to garner buy-in and support from leadership. She also learned that hard data from a

## Organization Background

Lake Cumberland District Health Department

- « Established in 1971
- « Government agency
- « Industry sector: Health care and social assistance
- « Locations: Adair, Casey, Clinton, Cumberland, Green, McCreary, Pulaski, Russell, Taylor, and Wayne counties, Kentucky
- « 200 Employees
- « 91% women, 9% men

The mission of the Lake Cumberland District Health Department (LCDHD) is to prevent illness and injury, promote good health practices, and ensure a safe environment to protect and improve the health of its communities. LCDHD is working to be a progressive leader in promoting community health among the residents (about 200,000) it serves across 10 counties. As an agency dedicated to the health of its community, LCDHC works to set an example by promoting and creating opportunities for wellness among its staff.



health assessment helps show the need for wellness opportunities for staff and demonstrate how such an investment would create a healthier, more productive workforce.

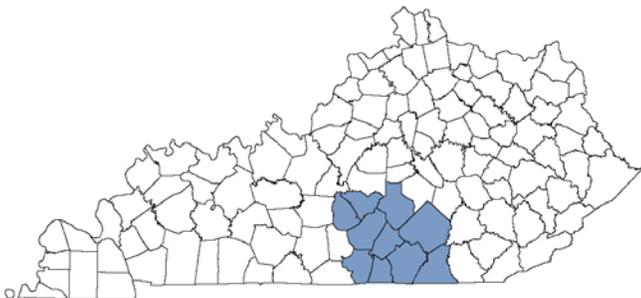
After the training, Huckelby and her colleagues branded LCDHD's wellness program "Working on Wellness." They also applied for and received seed funding from the Work@Health® program to help them set up programs and strategies in their workplace.

## Program Overview

Employers selected to participate in Work@Health® were assigned to one of three models, all of which delivered the same comprehensive workplace health curriculum.

1. The hands-on model was an on-site, instructor-led one-day training workshop held in one of six regional locations.
2. The online model allowed employers to move through the curriculum independently over several weeks using a web-based learning platform.
3. The blended model included a combination of hands-on and online learning strategies.

After participating in the Work@Health® program, LCDHD set up a formal worksite wellness program, including a wellness committee. Ensuring good representation on the committee was a challenge because the staff is spread across a 10-county district and includes people working in the field, like school health nurses and home visiting nurses.



Ten county region served by Lake Cumberland District Health Department

The committee's goal was to identify wellness activities

that everyone could participate in, regardless of their location. It decided to build on a program used successfully in the past—an 8-week "health habits" challenge that asked staff to integrate healthier habits, like walking more and drinking more water, into their daily lives, with the assumption that it takes 8 weeks to form a habit. The challenge was designed to meet all levels of fitness, and staff could participate at their own worksites.

Employees who used an online or mobile app to track their workout got points toward a rewards program set up by LCDHD's insurance carrier if they burned more than 200 calories an hour. These points added up to currency that could be used at an online mall. LCDHD also used an online app that is part of the insurance carrier's wellness program to set up an employee steps challenge. Staff could use a pedometer connected to the app to upload their steps daily and see how their coworkers were doing.

In September 2015, 57 LCDHD employees used this app to compete in a statewide steps challenge, with pedometers donated by the insurance carrier.

LCDHD has also worked with the insurance carrier's wellness program to enhance its worksite wellness program. Staff can sign up to participate in a physical activity program and set their own fitness goals. This program has a free mobile app that employees can download to



An LCDHD employee exercises at her desk.  
Photo provided by LCDHD.

track their fitness level. LCDHD's wellness committee plans to use the app to create a walking challenge for staff. In addition, Huckelby works with the insurer's staff in her region to plan health activities and find ways to promote the program to her employees. The insurer has also donated wearable tracking devices and pedometers to use as program incentives.

To measure its employees' health, LCDHD launched an online HRA, which 72% of its staff completed. The agency plans to ask staff to complete the HRAs and a needs-and-interest survey every 2 years to track employee health over time. It also plans to repeat biometric screenings held through its insurer in 2014 at least once a year (and more often if the employee requests it) to track the health of its employees over time.

The wellness committee also used results from the organization assessment administered as part of Work@Health® to develop a nutrition policy that sets guidelines for the food provided at meetings and staff events. Although some employees were concerned about limited food choices, LCDHD's executive director felt strongly that food paid for by the agency should be healthy.

One of LCDHD's greatest assets is its supportive leadership. After the agency participated in the Work@Health® training, it suffered funding cuts that affected staff morale. The wellness committee was concerned that employees might see its worksite

health promotion efforts as a waste of money. To overcome this potential problem, the committee made sure to share information about the origins of the wellness program and used the seed money from Work@Health® to market the program to employees, and to organize a lunch and learn session and provide educational materials to participants. The committee found that the program actually energized employees, and it immediately had buy-in from leadership, which recognized the need for a formal program to meet the agency's wellness goals.

Key departments in LCDHD have also been supportive of the wellness program. For example, the Diabetes Education Department offers diabetes classes for employees, and the Health Education Department offers a smoking-cessation program. The nursing staff makes sure that all staff who lead wellness activities have the materials they need.

*"We felt [that] if we were going to be out there preaching it, we should be living it. If we tell a business in the community that they're going to do healthy vending options, we should be doing that. I think our executive director feels [that] because we are public health, we need to be a model in the community."*

—Carol Huckelby, Grant Writer and Administrative Assistant at LCDHD

## Program Success



LCDHD employees take a walk during the workday.  
Photo provided by LCDHD.

Like all of the employers participating in the Work@Health® program, LCDHD used the CDC [Worksite Health ScoreCard](#) to assess the extent to which

it had evidence-based health promotion strategies in place before and after training. The ScoreCard is a

free tool that employers can use to assess their health promotion and disease prevention programs, identify gaps, and set priorities across health topics.

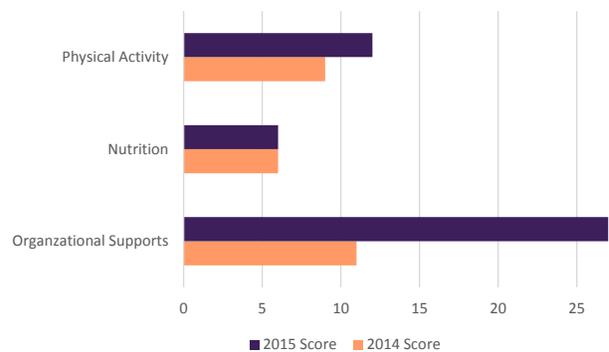
Strategies assessed by the ScoreCard include health-promoting counseling services, environmental supports, policies, health plan benefits, and other worksite programs shown to be effective in helping to prevent or mitigate heart disease, stroke, and related health conditions.

LCDHD increased its total ScoreCard score from 171 to 200 out of a possible 264 points. The agency showed the greatest improvement in the number of evidence-based strategies it offered that focused on physical

activity. After it used the ScoreCard as part of its Work@Health® training, LCDHD put the following strategies in place:

- Posting signs at elevators, stairwell entrances/exits and other key locations that encourage employees to use the stairs.
- Providing work-life balance/life-skills programs.
- Providing free or subsidized self-management programs for preventing or controlling high blood pressure.
- Having an emergency response plan that addresses acute heart attack and stroke events.
- Having a written injury and/or illness prevention policy.

**CDC Worksite Health ScoreCard Overall Score in Wellness Programming, 2014-2015**



LCDHD more than doubled its score in the Organizational Supports module, which assesses the extent to which organizations have a foundation in place to support and maintain a worksite health promotion program. The agency now conducts an employee needs and interests survey, has demonstrated organizational commitment from all levels of management, and has an active health promotion committee.

## Learning from Work@Health®

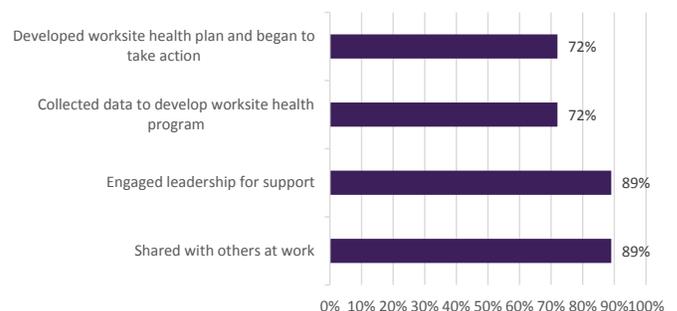
In a survey after the blended model training in Chicago, all participants in the session with Huckelby said the training increased their knowledge about how to develop, set up, and evaluate a comprehensive worksite health promotion program. Ninety-two percent said they understood how to apply what they had learned in the training to their jobs, and 92% said they would be able to use what they had learned at their jobs.

After completing the technical assistance portion of the program, all participants were asked to list the top three lessons they had learned. Huckelby said she had learned the following:

1. Assessment of employee needs and interests is important.
2. Various types of data are needed to help identify needs (e.g., HRAs, surveys, insurance claims).
3. All levels of management should be involved on the wellness committee and in the program.

About 6 months later, participants were asked to complete surveys about what they had done since the training. Most (90%) said they had shared the information with others in their organization and used it to engage leadership support. Huckelby said she used the information to plan LCDHD’s 8-week healthy habits challenge. Seventy-two percent of participants had already developed a worksite health plan and were beginning to take action.

**How Work@Health® Trainees in the Chicago, IL Blended Model are using the Information They Learned in the Program**



## Challenges

With over 200 employees spread over 10 counties and many different programs, LCDHD's biggest challenge was setting up a wellness program that could reach all of its staff. To overcome this challenge, the agency created a wellness committee with staff from multiple locations, programs, and job types which Huckelby and her staff chose carefully. This diversity helps make sure all employees' needs are taken into account when activities are planned. It also lessens the burden on any individual staff member to manage the programs locally.

Another challenge is the time needed to plan activities and travel to committee meetings. These

activities must be done in addition to other job duties, and committee members are asked to sign a contract stating that they understand the responsibilities they are taking on. In the future, the committee hopes to be able to use informational technology resources to meet remotely.

Leadership support has remained strong despite these challenges. Committee members are allowed to use work time for their efforts, and employees can take work time for HRAs and biometric screenings, as well as to participate in other wellness activities (e.g., diabetes management and smoking-cessation classes). Committee members are supported by additional wellness champions in all 10 counties, who help promote the wellness program locally.

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## What's Next?

Over the next 12 months, LCDHD plans to conduct the following activities for worksite health promotion:

- Continue to promote the wellness incentives and services available through its insurance carrier.
- Conduct biometric screening once a year and HRAs and needs-and-interests surveys every 2 years.
- Update its healthy meeting policy to make sure a healthy food option is available whenever a meal is paid for by LCDHD, and get the policy approved by the district's Board of Health.
- Create an online group for staff to share information about nutrition and physical activity options in their communities and to help each other be healthier.
- Continue to use the results of employee surveys to develop and offer wellness activities (e.g., programs designed to prevent and control diabetes and reduce stress, healthy habits challenges, hiking and cycling clubs).



*The Work@Health® employer-training program is an initiative of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to promote workplace wellness through employer education, training, and technical assistance. Work@Health® training provides employers with knowledge and tools through a comprehensive curricula to promote good health in their work places to prevent or reduce chronic illness and disability, and improve productivity.*