

Louisiana Creates a Wellness Culture in Worksites

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At A Glance

The Louisiana Department of Health (LDH), Office of Public Health improves workplace health through the Well-Ahead Louisiana WellSpot Designation Program. Well-Ahead promotes chronic disease prevention efforts where Louisiana residents live, work, learn, and play. As a result of Well-Ahead, 187 organizations have started a comprehensive worksite wellness program.



Public Health Challenge

Louisiana is well known for its great food, music, and legendary festivals. Unfortunately, the state is also known for poor health. According to the 2015 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 36% of Louisiana adults are classified as obese and 33% are classified as overweight. Less than half (46%) of adults get enough aerobic physical activity each week, and 32% get no physical activity during their leisure

time. As a result, Louisiana ranks poorly compared to other states - 45th for physical inactivity among all states and 50th for obesity in the 2016 America's Health Rankings annual report. Louisiana also ranks 45th for diabetes and 46th for cardiovascular deaths. Worksite wellness programs can help create environments that reduce the risk for obesity and other chronic conditions.

Find Out More

Well-Ahead promotes chronic disease prevention efforts by coordinating the investment of prevention funds and focusing on systems-level health interventions to reach residents in a streamlined and efficient way. To learn more about Well-Ahead, visit <http://wellaheadla.com/This> initiative is partially supported by the State Public Health Actions to Prevent and Control Diabetes, Heart Disease, Obesity, and Associated Risk Factors and Promote School Health cooperative agreement (DP13-1305).

The timing of the East Louisiana Mental Health Hospital's Wellness Program was perfect. We've seen so many small changes over the past year. It has been one of the first programs that has taken 'root' for employees, and they feel appreciated.
- Wellness Committee Member

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Approach

In 2014, LDH launched Well-Ahead to encourage and support organizations in creating healthier workplaces. These organizations include worksites, schools, child care centers, hospitals, and universities. Organizations complete an online assessment and choose wellness benchmarks specific to their organization type. Examples of benchmarks include tobacco-free policies, breastfeeding policies, worksite wellness programs, and nutrition policies. Each organization receives an action plan, resources, and guidance on how to reach the benchmarks. Organizations that achieve enough benchmarks are designated as a level 1, level 2 or level 3 WellSpot, with level 1 being the highest.

Results

As of September 2017, 187 organizations started a worksite wellness program as a result of WellAhead. All of these organizations achieved at least a level 2 status by adopting a comprehensive tobacco-free policy and meeting at least five other benchmarks. Examples include: Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System adopted a healthy vending policy that ensures at least 50% of the vending options are healthy for its 14,000 employees, visitors, and over 2.6 million patients per year. The East Louisiana Mental Health Hospital opened a new lactation room for breastfeeding mothers and offered 43 wellness events and activities in the program's first year for all 1,367 employees. Rainbow Child Care Center and 31 other WellSpots created a healthy meeting policy to make healthy food options available during employee meetings and events.

What's Next

Well-Ahead will continue to offer technical assistance and online resources to WellSpots across the state to create or improve health policies and worksite wellness programs. Numerous resources provided to WellSpots are accessible on the Well-Ahead Louisiana website. In addition, through partnership with Louisiana Area Health Education Centers, Well-Ahead will continue to reach out to organizations and community leaders to improve the health of Louisiana residents.