

Agency Wellness Champions Meeting
January 26, 2010
1:30 pm-3:00 pm
Department of Health

Members Present:

Colleen Cooley Schmitz	DNR
Amie Jannetto	OHE
Shannon Tupper	MMB
Bob Eder-Zdechlik	MMB
Chris Barth	DOC
Karen Hanauer	MMB
Nikki Trifilette	MDH
Debbie Lerdahl	Admin
Janice Jones	MDH
Claudia Olson	Admin
Qin Tang	DOT
Linda Feltes	MMB
Sandy Stolt	Retirement Systems
Sally Kupferschmidt	Retirement Systems
Chris VanBergen	MDH
Joanne Prillaman	Judicial
Tim Myers	MDH
Kim Engwer-Moylan	MDH
Patty Atchison	MDH

Guest Presenter: Judith Lies, Heartwood Mindfulness Practice Center

Introductions

- At next month's meeting, Champions will discuss program progress at each agency and will work on the 2010 planning.
 - The hope and expectation is that, over the course of the year, Champions will pull a few items from the 2010 work plan to be implemented at their agencies.
- Linda would like Champions from every agency to fill out an environmental assessment for their agency (the assessment is called "Check for Health"—Linda provided this by email and also in hard copy at the meeting).
 - The results should be submitted to Linda and a copy should be kept for the agency to help in planning.
 - Assessment is to be done by each agency in their main building; however, agencies who have sites throughout the state should try to gather information from at least one outstate site as well as a central location.

- The results of all agencies completing this assessment will allow Linda, the Champions and any other interested parties to have a good idea of what wellness amenities are at each agency and have a view of the state as a whole.
- Linda will be able to assist Champions with the assessment wherever needed to get the assessment completed.
- Linda will compile the assessment data from all agencies and use as a baseline for future years to keep track of progress made in wellness for each agency as well as the state as a whole. This data will allow Linda to report out to unions and other entities that would like information on what agencies have available for wellness.
- Linda also briefly discussed the document entitled, “Fundamentals of Evaluation” (Linda provided by email). This article provides an easy to understand summary of how to evaluate wellness programs.
 - Linda indicated that she has several evaluation templates that can be used by Champions to evaluate agency wellness programs.
- Data Assessment–JourneyWell Health Assessment
 - Linda indicated that 70% of state employees took the JourneyWell Health Assessment
 - Linda stated that she has the ability to break down the information and data from the Assessment for use
 - Other data that is available includes:
 - Medical information
 - Productivity
 - Employee wishes on what they would like to see in the workplace
- Linda will also continue to track meeting participation and will also survey the group to see how she can serve the group better
- Linda indicated that everyone should make sure to gather positive comments in writing to show the support of the program (this can be used as a very powerful tool in addition to data that can be pulled from various places)

Guest Speaker Judith Lies–Seeds of Mindfulness

Judith is founder of HEARTWOOD Mindfulness Practice Center, and has been an instructor of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction in medical, mental health, professional, educational, religious, and corporate settings for 16 years. She trained professionally with Jon Kabat-Zinn and currently practices and studies with Thich Nhat Hanh and his monks and nuns in France and the U.S.

- Judith has worked with 18 corporations and has not seen a better developed wellness program that covers so many employees at different levels.
- Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction
 - Everyone practices stress reduction even if not formally practiced. This is done by simply having a hobby that allows you to relax. For example, there is mindfulness in reading. During reading, the body and mind are in the same place at the same time focusing on what is being read.
 - The key to experiencing mindfulness is to live “as is” meaning that the mind and the body in are in the same place at the same time.

- The mind and the body are not often in the same place at the same time since we are often thinking thoughts that are not where we currently are (we are typically thinking about meetings, situations, etc. that are not taking place at the time we are thinking of them).
 - Experiencing mindfulness requires learning how to cultivate being in the present moment “without judgment and without expectation”.
- Power of the mind
 - Judith did an exercise to show the power of the mind by telling a story involving several stressful events. Judith explained that just in hearing the story, listeners felt the stress of the situation and began to experience some physical responses to the story.
 - Physical responses included feeling tension in certain parts of the body (head, neck, legs), breathing more quickly and heavily, increased heart rate, etc.
 - Judith explained that just thinking about stressful situations makes your body react with the fight or flight response which is a normal response to stressful situations but is not healthy when it happens frequently. Additional issues resulting from stress include:
 - Stress on the body can pull blood away from the brain.
 - Stress can put dangerous pressure on the cardiovascular system and over time it can have a very bad long term effect.
 - Stress causes adrenaline goes through your body, which has a detrimental effect on sugar levels. Your body craves sugar when stressed which results in high sugar intakes which can have problematic impacts such as diabetes.
- The suffering that the body experiences from thinking about stress is not necessary and can be avoided through mindfulness.
 - In order to truly benefit from mindfulness, you must build the muscle of mindfulness so that the muscle is well developed when needed.
 - Mindfulness involves building a skill so the practice is there when we need it. If we have the skill in place, we won’t react to the stressful situation as it arises and we are prepared to deal with it when it happens.
- Judith did a relaxation session with the group for a few minutes to show how to build the muscle of mindfulness.
 - Judith talked the group through breathing and releasing thoughts from the mind.
 - Just a few minutes of the exercise led to positive physical changes for the group.
 - Judith indicated that just 10 minutes a day can lead to improvement of the immune system.
 - The longer the exercise sessions, the more benefit the body will receive.
 - Exercising mindfulness can be done at any point—even waiting for a light or waiting for a meeting to start.
 - The average American spends 150 hours per year waiting. This waiting time would allow for ample opportunity to practice mindfulness.
 - The origins of the mindfulness training that Judith teaches comes from Buddhism, and has been tailored to western life and language.

- Most other similar classes involve the Buddhist religion–Judith’s classes do not involve religion.
- Judith indicated that she teaches:
 - Mindful eating
 - Mindful breathing
 - Mindful daily living
 - Mindful walking
 - Mindful yoga
- A course for an agency can be dovetailed in any way the agency/company wishes.
 - Judith is very flexible as to how classes for agencies would be set up in terms of payment and organization.
 - Linda indicated that some agencies have offered a 2-hour class at the end of the day for employees where employees can use vacation time or balance their time during the workday to attend.
 - Judith passed around a flyer outlining her services.
 - Champions should consider utilizing Judith’s services since employee survey data indicates that stress reduction services are highly sought after by employees.

Next Meeting

Tuesday, February 23, 2010

1:30-3 pm

Mn/DOT

Transportation Building

395 John Ireland Blvd

St. Paul, MN 55155

Room G-22 (Ground Floor)

(We are trying to set this up as a Web conference. Will keep you informed.)

SAVE THE DATE:

The Agency Wellness Champions team meets every last Tuesday of the month, from 1:30-3 pm.