

Kansas Employers Compliance with Healthy People 2010 Initiatives Targeting Health Promotion in the Workplace

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Abstract. Introduction: The CDC and the Department of Health and Human Services has set a goal to increase the number of health promotion programs in the workplace as part of the Healthy People 2010 Initiative. Health promotion programs are designed to promote health in the workplace by targeting health risk reduction and actively preventing the onset of disease. The purpose of this study is to determine the number of Kansas employers currently offering a health promotion program, what types of services are offered, what barriers exist for employers who are not currently offering a program, and to compare the size of the company to these findings. **Methodology:** Five hundred companies were selected from the database Reference USA and were divided into 5 groups according to size. Surveys were sent to each employer and frequencies of answers were tabulated and compared to company size. **Results:** 154 surveys were returned for a 30.8% response rate. 60% of respondents stated that they offered a health promotion program. 73% of respondents employing more than 250 people offer a program and only 45% of companies employing less than 250 people offer a program. **Discussion:** According to survey respondents, larger companies in the state seem to be on target with the CDC's goal of at least 75% of employers offering a health promotion program, while smaller companies, those with less than 250 employees, lag behind.

1. Introduction

The healthcare system in the United States is moving into an era in which the importance of preventive medicine is increasingly significant. Americans are becoming more involved in their health care and aware of medical issues, which are due in part to extensive media coverage, plus the growing popularity of the internet. Successful strategies to reduce the prevalence of cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, sexually transmitted diseases and number of other conditions involve reducing the risk for developing these diseases or conditions. Specifically, "health promotion programs are designed to promote health by reducing health risks and actively preventing the onset of disease [1]." Nearly 145 million people in the United States are employed, with the employment to population ratio being 63.1% [2]. Taking these figures into consideration, the workplace is an ideal place to introduce preventive health strategies to employees through worksite health promotion programs. These programs have been increasing in popularity since the concept was first introduced in the 1970's.

The growing trend toward providing preventive health services at the worksite can be attributed to the possibility that companies realize the many benefits from providing such services. Potential direct benefits for the company include the reduction of insurance and employee health related costs, absenteeism, employee turnover, work-related injuries and the increase of productivity in the workplace. Typical programs offer health promotion activities related to smoking cessation, exercise, and weight management, usually in the form of counseling for behavior modification, in-service meetings, and consultations. Screenings for hypertension and hypercholesterolemia are also utilized in order to diagnose and treat employees who are at risk. Other types of counseling services and activities offered are related to STD's/HIV, seatbelt use, home safety, alcohol and substance abuse, stress management and several others. More extensive screening tests are also used depending on company preference and resources.

Every ten years the CDC sets goals for the nation to attain in the next decade. The current goals are called the Healthy People 2010 Initiatives and one of the goals is to "increase the proportion of worksites that offer a comprehensive health promotion program to their employees [3]." The target goal is to have at least 75% of companies offering a comprehensive employee health promotion program by the end of this decade [3]. It has been 8 years since the last national survey on worksite health promotion; therefore, it is not known how many worksites currently offer a comprehensive health promotion program, including those in Kansas. The purpose of this study is to determine the number of Kansas employers currently offering a health promotion program,

what types of services are offered, what barriers exist for employers who are not currently offering a program, and compare the size of the company to these findings.

2. Experiment, Results, Discussion, and Significance

Methodology: Over 136,000 Kansas companies are listed by Reference USA [4]. This list was used to randomly select 500, which were divided into five groups according to company size. A survey was created which asked about the availability of insurance benefits for employees, availability of health promotion programs, length of time the program had been in place, what services were offered, and barriers to offering a program. Surveys were mailed to subjects and responses were tabulated and compared to company size. *Results:* One hundred fifty-four surveys were returned for a 30.8% response rate. Overall, 60% of survey respondents currently offer a health promotion program for their employees. Results according to company size are listed in Table 1.

Company size	Percentage
Less than 50 employees	17%
50-99 employees	57%
100-249 employees	51%
250-999 employees	64%
More than 1000 employees	84%

It was also noted that 93.5% of survey respondents pay for a portion of health insurance benefits for their employees. Approximately 30% of employers offering a health promotion program have seen a reduction of insurance and employee health related costs as well as a reduction in work-related injuries. Twenty-three percent of employers have noted a reduction in employee absenteeism and 15% have seen a reduction in employee turnover since implementing a health promotion program. Sixty-six percent of employers not currently offering a health promotion program stated that a lack of financial resources was a barrier, 67% that staff to implement or administer the program was an issue and 63% that time during working hours for employees to participate was an issue. *Discussion:* The number of larger companies in Kansas offering a health promotion program is closer to the target goal of 75%, while smaller companies are further behind. Only 17% of companies with less than 50 employees are currently offering a program. This is significant because, out of 136,895 business entities in Kansas, 131,177 (95.8%) employ less than 50 people. The numbers regarding reductions seen since implementation of the program may not be an accurate reflection because a large number of survey respondents did not answer that question. It should also be noted that less than 1% of Kansas companies were surveyed, so the results of this pilot study can not be generalized to the majority of companies in Kansas. Further studies, which survey a larger number of employers, should be done to determine whether this data is truly representative of Kansas and what percent of Kansas companies are actually meeting the Healthy People 2010 goals for health promotion in the workplace.

3. Conclusions

The growing importance of preventive medicine coupled with the fact that over half of the U.S. population is employed suggests that the workplace is an ideal environment to introduce preventive strategies to reduce health risks. The findings of this pilot study suggest that more larger companies in Kansas are on track to meet the CDC's goal of 75% of companies offering a health promotion program by the year 2010 than are smaller companies. Lack of resources and staff to implement and administer the program may be barriers.

[1] Aldana SG, Pronk NP. Health Promotion programs, modifiable health risks, and employee absenteeism. *Journal of occupational and environmental medicine / American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*. Jan 2001;43(1):36-46.

[2] Employment Situation Summary. *U.S. Department of Labor*; October 2006.

[3] Healthy People 2010, 7, Educational and Community-Based Programs [on the internet]. *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*.; November 2000.

[4] Reference USA: infoUSA.