



Results of the 2013 Worksite Wellness Committee Employee Survey

The Worksite Wellness Committee (WWC) surveyed all Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) employees to gain insight for future wellness programming. Staff were sent a link to the online survey in a Department-wide email. During the survey period, 676 employees responded for a response rate of 38.2%.

The survey results provide a wealth of information for the WWC to consider. Areas where the committee has achieved its goals were highlighted as well as areas that need additional consideration. The survey included questions about employee interests and programming preferences, barriers and motivators for participation in wellness activities, impact of committee activities and employee characteristics. Employees were given several opportunities to provide open ended remarks. Some of the comments are included as Appendix 1. This document provides a summary of key findings.

Respondent Demographics

Staff completing the survey:

- Were predominately female (89.5%).
- Represented a variety of positions, however a majority of respondents were program (47.3%) or support staff (29.9%). Fewer respondents held management positions (22.8%) or marked “other” (5%).
- Fell across age categories, with the majority of respondents being 50-59 years of age (35.8%) followed by 40-49 years of age (26.9%). Additionally 19% of respondents were 30-39 years; 12.3% were 60 years or older and 5.9% were 20-29 years.

Employee Interests

Employees were asked to select their top interest areas for worksite wellness programming from a list of 12 topics. Physical activity ranked highest, followed by maintaining a healthy weight and nutrition. Memory boosting activities were of interest to just under half of respondents. Areas with the smallest amount of interest were tobacco cessation (3.3%) and personal relationships (13.5%). Additional topics of interest include:

- Personal and workplace safety, including planning for natural disasters
- Missouri 100 Miles Challenge
- Managing a heavy workload
- Diabetes
- Cooking healthy meals on a budget

Employees were asked to rate their interest for participating in wellness-related activities (Table One). Respondents were most interested in joining small groups for physical activity, preventive wellness screenings and making healthier foods available in the workplace. These results reflect little change since the 2011 employee survey.

Table One. Employee Interests

Activity	% Rating Interest as High and Very High	
	2013	2011
Joining small groups or classes for:		
• physical activity (such as walking groups)	52.1%	39.9%
• support and information on healthy eating habits	49%	26.8%
• Other activities (crafting, music, etc.)	30.1%	N/A
Participating in department-wide fitness challenges	49.4%	42.7 %
Healthy choices in the café and vending machines	56.5%	56.6%
Preventive wellness screenings (blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes)	69.7%	67.3%



Additional activity ideas given for the wellness committee to consider include: sharing ideas for healthy snack days; using a wellness challenge activity to raise funds for the Missouri State Employee Charitable Campaign; creating ergonomic workstations including standing workstations; making exercise space and equipment available; planning bike rides and offering meal planning resources. Employees provided suggestions that are not within the scope of the wellness committee, such as improving air quality. These suggestions will be shared with the appropriate authority.

Barriers and Motivators for Participating in WWC Activities

Employees were asked to identify barriers for participating in wellness activities, such as exercise classes and Lunch-N-Learns. The most frequent barrier selected was lack of time over the lunch hour, followed closely by location of event (41.6%). This remains unchanged from the 2011 survey. More information about how the WWC is addressing these barriers is provided in the discussion section of this document.

Additional barriers identified by respondents include:

- Workload or work schedule conflicts including travel obligations
- Personal commitments
- Participation in exercise and other wellness activities outside of work
- Lack of facilities to freshen up after physical activity
- Physical limitations of employees

A few employees felt that a lack of support from management and coworkers hindered their participation in wellness activities. One employee commented *“This is extra-curricular activity not essential to the functions that the DHSS provides to Missouri citizens. These are personal activities that should be taken care of when not at work. These issues interfere with work. All these activities and committees take away from our productivity.”* This statement underscores the importance of communicating the benefits of worksite wellness activities to all employees.

Respondents felt that the lunch hour or breaks (76%) were the best times for scheduling wellness activities, followed by after work (33.8%). Some respondents offered helpful suggestions for increasing participation in wellness events, including offering classes multiple times, offering activities at different times throughout the day and decreasing the length of events. Many employees commented that if they were given additional time to participate in wellness activities, they would. A few employees recommended more flexible lunch times. One employee stated *“This is very selfish of me, but I don’t want to spend ‘my’ time at lunch on WWC activities. I’d be more willing if the activities were during work hours...maybe even if I had to use AL (annual leave) or make up time to attend.”* As this is already in department policy, the committee may need to help employees understand how to make wellness activities fit into their schedule.

Additional suggestions for improving participation include making activities more fun, making the webinars more engaging, offering different levels of physical activity so people at all levels can participate, and offering more activities that employees can do individually. One employee stated *“I prefer to do something by myself that is relaxing for me to prepare for the second half of my work day. Lunch and Learn seems a little too much like a continuation of the work day.”*

The top three personal motivators for participation in wellness activities were being healthy, maintaining a successful change of health such as weight loss and maintaining positive mental health. Table Two lists responses for all motivators. The top three responses in 2013 mirror the 2011 employee survey results.

Additional motivators mentioned include:

- Improving personal appearance
- Reducing pain or poor health



- Slowing the aging process
- Achieving personal growth

Over half of respondents felt WWC activities personally benefited them. Change in knowledge was the most reported benefit, followed by motivation to change behaviors. Open ended comments suggest that wellness activities increased awareness of healthy behaviors, improved the work environment and motivated employees to start and/or maintain habits already formed. For some employees, wellness activities have played a large role in changing health status and habits. The respondents' comments below reflect how worksite wellness activities have had a positive influence on employees.

Table Two. Wellness Motivators		
	2013	2011
Caring for family member(s)	14.6%	15.0%
Inspired by success of family member or friend	6.9%	5.3%
Being a role model for children	22.7%	21.8%
Being active with children or grandchildren	29.6%	32%
Achieving and maintaining a successful change in health	66%	58.3%
Maintaining positive mental health	48.9%	48.2%
Being healthy	86.7%	82%
Encouragement from/interaction with co-workers	23%	N/A

- *“I exercise everyday I’m in the office now.”*
- *“I continue to do Tai Chi on my own as a result of the class. It has been very helpful with balance.”*
- *“This has been another support for me in my weight loss this year. I have lost 40 pounds this year. I really like the Walking Wednesday’s jeans incentives.”*
- *“The special activities I’ve participated in are fun and help build a team atmosphere that carries over into work activities.”*

Some employees expressed appreciation for the Department’s commitment to wellness as evidenced by these comments:

- *“I like to learn new things and be updated with new information. I like knowing that my mental and physical health matters to my employer.”*
- *“Having worksite wellness speaks to the heart of who we are as employees within ‘health’ programs. Also it offers continued support for folks as we strive to be and get healthier. Keep up the good work. It’s worth it.”*
- *“It is nice knowing the department is supportive of these activities, and encouraging us to participate. It gives me motivation to come to work, knowing I will be able to go for a walk or participate in some fun activity that is planned for that day.”*

Discussion

Overall, the results of the survey show that the DHSS WWC has been successful in making a positive impact on employees and the DHSS work environment. The WWC will utilize these results for planning committee activities and setting operational goals. However, some major issues affecting how employees experience wellness activities remain, and need to be further addressed.

Location of Activities

As in previous surveys, many respondents made comments about the lack of opportunities for field employees. The WWC consistently aims to make wellness activities available to all DHSS employees. In FY2013, the committee offered four Lunch-N-Learn events via webinar, an opportunity to participate in a National Employee Health and Fitness Day walk, Walking Wednesdays and two other special activities to all DHSS employees. Additional blood pressure kits were provided to regional offices as well.



Unfortunately, the WWC does not have the capacity to organize activities in every regional office and must rely upon local wellness champions to provide additional programming comparable to activities offered in Jefferson City. A few regional offices have been very successful in offering local wellness activities. The WWC makes resources available through the DHSS intranet to assist in their efforts. One additional challenge with offering activities in regional offices relates to the nature of the positions located within these offices. Many field staff spend a majority of their work time traveling, making it difficult to schedule activities. The WWC will investigate wellness activities that can accommodate these employees, such as individual challenges.

Additional measures have been taken since the 2011 survey to address this issue. In 2011, the WWC established a “regional reach” subcommittee to better understand the needs of regional offices and to provide opportunities for these offices to communicate with one another about wellness activities. Additionally, the *Strive for Wellness* State Employee Wellness Program has established building wellness teams in at least three regional buildings that house DHSS employees. Two of these teams have successfully offered local activities for employees. The *Strive* program has plans to establish additional building teams in the year ahead. The WWC will assist the process however possible.

The WWC will continue to address support for regional offices and get input from field staff on how this might be done.

Employee Participation

Some of the open-ended comments expose a lack of awareness or understanding of the department’s policy that addresses participation in wellness activities. The WWC will make it a priority to ensure employees are aware of and understand the policy. Examples of how to adjust work schedules to accommodate wellness activities with supervisor permission will be made available. Also, the WWC will request time at an Institute of Management Excellence training to provide managers with information about the department’s wellness policy and benefits of wellness in an effort to garner more support for employee participation in activities.



Appendix One Additional Employee Comments

Employee Interests

*“In a sense, all of it but not necessarily wanting to participate. **Having a 'healthy minded' built environment worksite surrounding me continues to offer me the support I need to stay healthy and continue to progress.**”*

How can the WWC assist in removing barriers?

“I think the WWC staff do all they can in thinking outside the box in trying to make accommodations for events in every way. I don't have any ideas on how you can do more than you already do. Just know it is noticed and appreciated.”

*“Allow attending events without using lunch time - **consider the time professional development, just like any other training we attend during the work day.**”*

“Actually, I wish we got credit for activities we did before work. I don't have time to walk at work, but I run 4 miles before work. I would like to see recognition given for activities completed outside of work time. I think it's great that some people have time to participate in these activities at work, but there is no way I have time. Way too much work!”

“Allowing a flexible schedule that does not require a 5 day period. I exercise on Mon/Wed/Fri and coming in early on these days would allow a 30 minute flex during lunch [which] would be excellent. However the current policy requires that a flex schedule requires 5 days. The current flex also requires a perm condition. My trainer has at times asked that I change up the times I exercise to attend special classes held at the YMCA.”

*“**Assist with developing smaller manageable segments of physical exercise and meditative/stress relieving exercises which can be done without leaving the work area.** 1) A variety of written instructions and videos for 30 min workouts which can be done in the office, such as: a hand weight workout which can be done seated or standing at my desk, an exercise band workout which can be made progressively more effective by the choice of band strength (I wouldn't know what color was what strength). 2) A set of written instructions for a variety of short, physically engaging, mind clearing/rejuvenating stretches and stress relieving exercises which can be done 5 min at a time. 3) Since there's not an affordable gym close to the office, the freedom to take 30 minutes at the start or end of the day twice a week to enable a workout (proof of membership in a facility could be required). It would be splitting the responsibility for my hour workout into 30 min on my time and 30 min provided/enabled by the office.”*

*“Offer other incentives such as matching annual leave for events. **If the event is 1 hour, the employee should be able to use only 1/2 hour for annual leave.**”*

*“Allow administrative leave for wellness activities. Also **relax the requirement for 'double coverage' so more staff in our small office can participate.**”*

*“Encourage all bureaus to **actively encourage their employees** to participate.”*

“I think the regional staff do not feel a part of the activities and I think if we could work on making the activities more specific and intentional towards the regions where they feel more involved and included would be helpful.”



Personal Motivation for Wellness

"If only I had the time to be consistent with my attempts it would benefit me much more in the long run."

"I enjoy learning so that I can improve my health and that of my family."

"I feel better physically and emotionally when I'm fit and healthy."

Impact of WWC Activities

*"The encouragement, information, variety of activities and support of local on-site events are all positive factors encouraging all of us to do more here and **having the department support the mission is critical to the participation of staff.**"*

"The personal safety LNL a year or two ago changed my safety habits for the better."

*"We have a walking group and I have **successfully lost 20 lbs since starting.** So these work programs really do help."*

"I use the information provided and relay it to my husband as well. It has inspired my husband and I to do a workout program (couch to 5K, squat challenge, and arm challenge currently) and we are eating much healthier."

*"I've **lost 70 lbs in the last 18 months** and we have a group that walks in a close neighborhood at each break."*

*"I use the BP monitor every day it is available and indoor walking routes daily and **they've been important tools for improving my health.**"*

"I love that this Department strives to do well in improving the health of our staff!"

*"I think it is a great program. **It is encouraging to me to know that my place of work is helping me to be more healthy. They don't just care about me showing up to do my job each day--they want me to also work on myself to be healthier.** I understand that by being healthier, I will be happier and take less time off for sicknesses."*

Suggestions for Additional Wellness Activities

"Campus wide smoking/tobacco use ban - let the smokers go to the sidewalk in front of the building if they must smoke. (You see it in many other places, it shows those driving or walking by that the department has a smoke-free campus.) It is hard to walk around the parking lot fully with smokers in the corners. Other DHSS campuses also need to be smoke-free. Honestly, I don't see why it is necessary to give them the opportunity to smoke around here. It IS an addiction & we don't support other addictions on our campus. And, we need to clean up the cigarette butts & keep them off the ground. The smokers were given the 'privilege' to smoke on campus in the corners, but they don't respect that privilege by putting their butts in the proper containers. Make them do regular pick-up of butts & those who throw theirs away will be more vigilant about reminding others to do the same."

"Many workplaces are substituting chairs for other alternatives (even walking workstations—think treadmill with a tall desk right in front of you). A little less extreme and one I feel would motivate those in the workforce is the use of large workout balls. They are used to improve posture and can be used during breaks to get small workouts in. Many schools have begun adapting them for students to help them pay attention and improve posture as well."



*“Recently I participated in a weight loss challenge in both my division and then with a group in my building. Although, I did not have the money to contribute monetarily they still accepted me in participating in the challenge by weighing in each week and being held accountable in that sense. For the most part, all people have a competitive nature so that **incentive and competition either division or department-wide might just be the thing to get myself and others involved in activities on a larger scale** and that would even encourage district/regional offices outside of JC to take part in a department sponsored challenge. I could see some real competition and teams going on. **I wonder if we could have teams fundraising and competing against one another and having the funds raised donated to MSECC next year.** It would be a win-win for staff and the campaign...I could see people getting very competitive and raising money for their team charity. This is something I think WWC should think about and perhaps get the DO's opinion. It's too late for this year's MSECC campaign, but there's always next year!!!”*

*“How about some motivation both on physical and mental health on tape that we can listen to while traveling from place to place? Tapes on stress reductions would be good to listen to when returning as a team back from a stressful survey. **Tapes could be placed in the car folders.**”*

“Educational activities, making it easier to track certain things, and integrate healthy lifestyle into the workday, like ergonomic work stations, healthy choices in vending machines, etc.”

“Great job- one of the best things about working for DHSS is the activities promoted by the group.”