

# State of Preventive Health 2008

## Durham County - Creating a Culture of Wellness

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### **Plan for gradual change**

Creating and implementing a wellness initiative is an ongoing process.

- Based on research into other employers' wellness programs, Durham County began our program with four components:
  - An on-site clinic.
  - A financial incentive for completing a health risk assessment (up to \$286 annually towards benefits).
  - Health and disease management classes on-site.
  - Providing the opportunity to exercise during the work day with an extra half-hour at lunch.
- Early successes
  - Almost 2/3 of our employees completed HRAs since our program began in May 2007.
  - Ninety-eight percent of those who had a risk factor identified have voluntarily followed up at the on-site wellness clinic.
- Expect and plan for some possible resistance and reluctance up front.
  - You can alleviate this by making it easy for employees to participate early on.
  - Increase your expectations of employees gradually.
  - Celebrate early successes with your employees.
- Based on these successes and interest from employees, we're considering the following next steps:
  - Adding pharmacy services to the wellness clinic.
  - Opening the clinic to employees' dependents and retired employees on the county health plan.
  - Greater expectations of employees – strongly encouraging employees with identified risk factors to have a health re-assessment annually.

### **Involve the right people in the process and the program**

Involving key players and influencers in developing and administering programs is key to changing behavior.

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- Development
  - Developing our Wellness Initiative was a joint effort between our Human Resources Department, Attorney's Office, Public Health Department and Public Information Office.
  - HR initiated and led the project.
  - Our Attorney's Office ensured that the program we developed respected patient confidentiality and abided by HIPAA regulations.
  - Our Public Health Department provided space for the clinic and provides speakers for our Wellness Education Classes.
  - The Public Information staff helped promote the kick-off of each program component.
- Implementation
  - Two keys to our successful implementation: the use of a third-party clinic vendor to assure employees that their health information is kept confidential and a family nurse practitioner skilled at developing a rapport with employees.
  - Our nurse practitioner meets with employees when they complete their HRAs; we believe that the rapport she develops with them contributes to the 98 percent follow-up rate.
  - She treats employees with respect, as if this were her private practice. Because this is an on-site clinic, she has more time to spend with patients than most private practitioners.

### **Culture change on a budget *is* possible**

If a local county government can do it – so can ***you***.

- Providing time for employees to walk at lunch requires no outlay of funds.
- Health and wellness classes can be provided at little or no cost by your local health department or nonprofits like the American Cancer Society, American Diabetes Association or the American Red Cross.
- If you're insured by BCBSNC, call to see what resources are available to you under your plan.