

Participating in CDC's Work@Health® Program

According to Marisa Mansfield, SEPI's human resources manager, the company's CEO is health conscious and a strong advocate for worksite health promotion. She supported Mansfield's efforts to develop and set up worksite health activities as part of her role in Human Resources. When Mansfield heard about the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Work@Health® program from her insurance carrier, she signed up for the hands-on training in Raleigh, North Carolina, in June 2014.

The [Work@Health®](#) program is designed to teach employers how to improve the health of their workers (and workers' families) by using prevention and wellness strategies that focus on chronic health conditions. Well-designed, science-based, and comprehensive workplace wellness programs can improve the health of individuals and companies, lower health care costs, and increase worker productivity.

Employers who were selected to participate in the 2014 training were assigned to one of three models, all of which delivered the same comprehensive workplace health curriculum. After the training, participants received 6 to 10 months of technical assistance in the form of coaching, webinars, and interactions with peers. The

With training and effort, employers of all sizes and types can plan and implement a workplace health program. Employers can learn from the experiences of employers like SEPI about how to plan strategies and anticipate implementation challenges.

Work@Health® training emphasized the importance of setting up a wellness committee and recruiting "champions" to promote worksite wellness.

During the training session in Raleigh, Mansfield said she found it especially helpful to talk with other employers about what they were doing to promote employee health

in their organizations. Afterwards, she was motivated to recruit more of her coworkers to help her "bump up" SEPI's wellness program. Because she was the only Human Resources manager for a company with more than 200 employees, she realized that she needed help with every aspect of developing and setting up worksite health promotion activities.

Organization Background

SEPI Engineering & Construction

- « Established in 2001
- « Private firm
- « Industry sector: Professional, scientific, and technical services
- « Location: Raleigh, North Carolina
- « 210 Employees
- « 15% women, 85% men

SEPI is a mid-size, full service civil engineering, surveying, planning, remediation, and construction management firm that provides services to private and public clients. SEPI works to improve the quality of life at the community level and help its clients in education, private sector, and local, state, and federal markets be successful. SEPI's organizational culture is dedicated to building great environments, including its own working environment.

Marisa Mansfield is head of Human Resources at SEPI, and she is also in charge of worksite health promotion at the company. When she took the position in 2012, SEPI had no worksite health promotion program in place. Because Mansfield is passionate about leading a healthy lifestyle, she set up worksite health activities like weight loss challenges and lunch

and learn sessions with nutritionists from a local hospital soon after she arrived. She also organized a running club, on-site flu shots, and a \$25 monthly reimbursement for gym membership. SEPI also began offering up to \$250 in reimbursement costs to employees for smoking cessation treatments approved by the US Food and Drug Administration.

Employers selected to participate in Work@Health® were assigned to one of three models, all of which delivered the same comprehensive workplace health curriculum.

1. The hands-on model was an on-site, instructor-led, one day training workshop held in one of six regional locations.
2. The online model allowed employers to move through the curriculum independently over several weeks using a web-based learning platform.

3. The blended model included a combination of hands-on and online learning strategies.

“Going through the training, it gives you that push. I’m doing this reporting and taking time to do this—I need to bump up my program. That pushed me to do this more.”

—Marisa Mansfield, Human Resources Manager

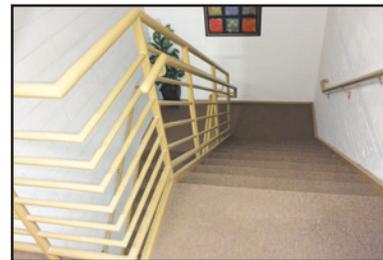
Program Overview

Assessing Needs and Interests

After participating in the Work@Health® training, Mansfield created a small wellness committee of three people to help keep current activities going and to build momentum for a more comprehensive and sustainable program. To develop a more systematic plan, she applied what she had learned about the importance of assessing your worksite. For example, although Mansfield had done some assessment of employee interests before the training, the wellness committee now does formal surveys on a routine basis. Mansfield also uses SEPI’s annual open enrollment period for benefits to survey employees about their wellness needs and interests, because she knows she has their attention. The company supports this effort by giving employees \$250 in a health savings account if they complete the survey.

Creating a Healthier Environment

The wellness committee has used the results of its assessments to find ways to help employees be healthy at work. For example, they identified a need and interest in increasing physical activity levels and reducing stress. To promote physical activity, the committee worked on changing the work environment. Mansfield applied for seed funding from Work@Health® and used part of the money to make the staircases in SEPI’s buildings more attractive



*The newly carpeted stairs at SEPI.
Photo provided by SEPI.*

and appealing so people would use them more. The company put carpet on the stairs and posted signs with inspiring quotes and information

about how many calories employees would burn by using the stairs. The committee also posted signs in the elevators encouraging stair use.

To help employees reduce stress, the committee invited massage therapists to provide on-site chair massages for employees who signed up and paid out-of-pocket. The first time the therapists came, all 10 slots were filled, so the committee decided to make it a recurring event. The committee also invited a certified yoga instructor to provide on-site classes in yoga and meditation. In addition, the committee is continuing to offer SEPI’s other health promotion activities, including the weight loss challenges, running club, gym reimbursements, smoking cessation reimbursements, and flu shots. The level of participation in these activities varies greatly depending on staff schedules and availability to attend.

Program Success

Like all of the employers participating in the Work@Health® program, SEPI used the [CDC Worksite Health ScoreCard](#) to assess the extent to which it had evidence-based health promotion strategies in place before it started the program in 2014 and again at the end of the program in 2015. The ScoreCard is a free tool that employers can use to assess their health promotion and disease prevention programs, identify gaps, and set priorities across health topics..

Strategies assessed by the ScoreCard include health promoting counseling services, environmental supports, policies, health plan benefits, and other worksite programs shown to be effective in preventing heart disease, stroke, and related health conditions.

SEPI increased its total ScoreCard score from 137 to 179 out of a possible 264 points. The company showed

the biggest improvements in the number of evidence-based strategies it offered that focused on stress management, depression, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol.

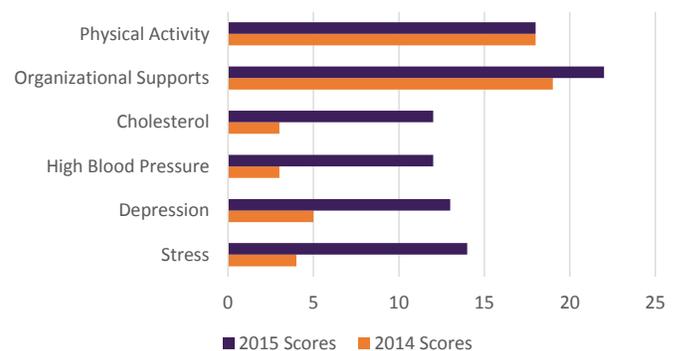


SEPI employees dress in red for the American Heart Association's National Wear Red Day. Photo provided by SEPI.

Examples of evidence-based strategies SEPI put in place during their Work@Health® training using the ScoreCard that it did not have in place in 2014 include:

- Providing a dedicated space that is quiet where employees can engage in relaxation activities, such as deep breathing exercises.
- Providing training for managers on identifying and reducing workplace stress-related issues.
- Providing access to online or paper self-assessment depression screening tools.
- Providing one-on-one or group lifestyle counseling for employees with depression.
- Providing free or subsidized self-management programs for cholesterol/lipid control.

CDC Worksite Health ScoreCard Overall Score in Wellness Programming, 2014-2015



In addition to increasing its overall score, SEPI also increased its score in the Organizational Supports module, which assesses the extent to which organizations have a foundation in place to support and maintain a worksite health promotion program. After the Work@Health® training, SEPI began setting annual objectives for its wellness program, and it uses multiple data sources to conduct ongoing evaluations.

The key to SEPI's success is support from upper management, according to Mansfield. She stated that the CEO of the company is very supportive of wellness and personally practices meditation. In 2014, before SEPI participated in the Work@Health® training, Mansfield was given an annual budget of \$8,000 for wellness activities, including the gym reimbursements.

Learning from Work@Health®

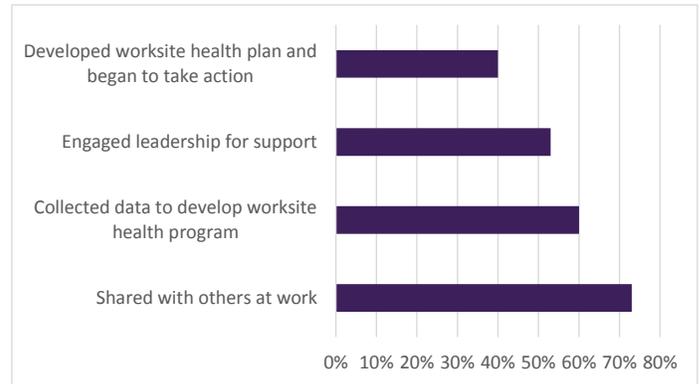
In a survey after the Raleigh training session in 2014, all of the participants said they understood how to apply what they had learned, and 95% said they would be able to use what they had learned at their jobs. After they completed the technical assistance portion of the program, participants were asked to list the top three lessons they had learned. Mansfield said she had learned the following:

1. How to get more employees to participate in worksite health promotion activities.
2. How to use other resources available through vendors, insurance plans, and community agencies to maximize her efforts.
3. How to develop a worksite health promotion committee.

In November, 2014, at the end of the technical assistance period, participants were also asked what they had done with the information they had learned in the training. Most had started sharing the information with others in their organizations and collecting data to set up or enhance their worksite health promotion programs.

Mansfield said she has always appreciated the support for worksite health promotion that she has received from SEPI's CEO that has existed since before her training. Work@Health® provided her the structure and skills to effectively plan, implement and evaluate evidence-based approaches to worksite wellness so she could build on this leadership support to make measurable employee health.

How Work@Health® Trainees in Raleigh, NC Hands-On Model are using the Information They Learned in the Program



Challenges

Although SEPI employees say they like the changes made to support worksite health, Mansfield reports that keeping employees enthusiastic about some activities has been hard. She also noticed that male employees, who make up 85% of the company's workforce, are typically less likely to be involved in worksite health activities. For example, most participants in yoga classes were women. Mansfield is using the results of the survey of employees' health needs and interests to find activities that will appeal to different members of SEPI's workforce.

Another challenge is that about 100 of SEPI's 150 employees work on off-site construction projects across North Carolina and Virginia, and they don't come into the office regularly where programs are offered. Mansfield works to overcome this challenge by communicating with employees through e-mail and by making sure there are ways for off-site staff to participate in as many activities as possible. For example, some activities are held after work, and on-site flu clinics start at 7 a.m. to accommodate employees who work in the field. Off-site staff can call into lunch and learn sessions, and all employees are eligible for gym membership reimbursements with local facilities that are closer to where they work.



SEPI conducts a lunch and learn session on ergonomics for employees.
Photo provided by SEPI.



SEPI employees pose together after a group workout session.
Photo provided by SEPI.

What's Next?

Mansfield's long-term wish list includes an on-site gym and a dedicated person, like a health coach, to work with employees. Over the next 12 months, SEPI is planning the following activities for worksite health promotion:

- Conduct a biometric screening at the start of the open enrollment period for benefits and offer lower premium rates to employees who participate.
- Expand its tobacco policy to include lower insurance premiums for nonsmokers to encourage employees to stop smoking.
- Continue lunch and learn sessions and invite people working in naturopathic health to speak.
- Conduct surveys to find out if employees are interested in meditation and yoga classes.



The Work@Health® employer-training program is an initiative of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to promote workplace wellness through employer education, training, and technical assistance. Work@Health® training provides employers with knowledge and tools through a comprehensive curricula to promote good health in their work places to prevent or reduce chronic illness and disability, and improve productivity