

Participating in the CDC's National Healthy Worksite Program

Leadership and staff at CIPROMS had been interested in starting a workplace health promotion program but did not know where to begin. They learned about the CDC's National Healthy Worksite Program (NHWP) through their insurance broker, Hylant Group, Inc. When CIPROMS started the NHWP, it did not have many workplace wellness initiatives in place. Human Resources Vice President Melissa Bird spearheaded the effort and was backed by CIPROMS' senior leadership team. Bird formed a wellness committee with 11 members, recruiting them from the various departments at CIPROMS. She also followed best practices by including individuals from different levels in the organization, from the Finance Vice President, to middle management, to coding and billing specialists. Getting started was tough because the wellness committee did not get any extra staffing support to cover its existing tasks and job duties. Applying the program's marketing and engagement strategies from the NHWP trainings, CIPROMS' wellness committee branded its health promotion program "CIPROMS Healthy Together" and organized a kick-off event to raise employee awareness and excitement about the new program. At the kick-off, the committee introduced the Healthy Together logo on water bottles it provided to staff.

CIPROMS applied principles of implementing a comprehensive health promotion program learned during the NHWP by putting in place a combination of programs, policies, and environmental supports to address multiple areas of employee health.

One of the first NHWP activities to be completed was a baseline assessment in 2013. An objective of the kick-off was to motivate employees to participate in the assessment. The NHWP assessments included employee health surveys covering health conditions, healthy behaviors, and perceptions about the work

environment, as well as biometric screenings.

Like all of the employers participating in the NHWP, CIPROMS also completed the [CDC Worksite Health ScoreCard](#), a validated organizational tool designed to help employers assess the extent to which they have implemented evidence-based health promotion

Organization Background

CIPROMS, Inc.

- « Established in 1982
- « Industry: Finance, Insurance & Real Estate
- « Location: Indianapolis, Indiana
- « 122 Employees

CIPROMS, Inc. is a mid-sized company specializing in medical coding and billing services. CIPROMS has a 95% female workforce and leadership team. CIPROMS' employees work hard to achieve their client-focused mission to "deliver effective, medical-practice solutions that enable our clients to realize their passion for practicing medicine . . . without enduring endless administrative burdens." The coding and billing work they do mainly involves sitting at a workstation throughout the day. Located on the fourth floor of a multi-story office building, CIPROMS is set up as a mix of cubicles, enclosed offices and conference rooms. It has a breakroom with refrigerators, microwaves, and vending machines. Its building is in an office park that has limited areas for walking or running, and is in close proximity to multiple restaurants.

interventions. The employees' health-needs assessment revealed priority areas based on the health risks that had the highest prevalence among CIPROMS' employees. The wellness committee set goals and specific, time-bound objectives to help achieve each goal. The goals and example objectives for each include:

- Goal: Support employees' efforts to lose weight.
 - Objective: Offer a weight management program to CIPROMS employees by December 1, 2014.
- Goal: Encourage employees to make healthier food choices.
 - Objective: Make 25% of the vending machine options healthier choices by September 30, 2014. (At the beginning of the program, it was approximately 10%.)
- Goal: Increase employees' physical activity levels.
 - Reduce the percentage of employees who are not physically active by 5%, by December 31, 2014. (At the beginning of the program, 77% of employees were not physically active.)

Bird participated in all of the NHWP trainings and webinars that addressed the main developmental stages for a wellness program – assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation. She also attended monthly meetings with other local NHWP employers that were facilitated by insurance broker Hylant. These meetings provided Bird and the other employers in the community an opportunity to share their strategies for overcoming common challenges, and to encourage and support one another. CIPROMS' wellness committee met monthly during the work day. Bird also had monthly technical assistance calls with CDC staff to share updates and to obtain advice and information resources.

Program Overview

CIPROMS applied principles of implementing a comprehensive health promotion program learned during the NHWP by putting in place a combination of programs, policies, and environmental supports to address several aspects of employee health. They also used multiple communications channels to provide educational materials, promote their activities, and encourage participation.

"Wellness goes beyond weight and physical activity, there should be a well-rounded focus on emotional health, stress management and financial health."

– Melissa Bird, CIPROMS Human Resources Vice President

Implementing a Weight Management Program

To directly address its goal of supporting employees' weight-loss efforts, the wellness committee arranged an initial 17-week Weight Watchers at Work program. Employees paid their own enrollment fees. Twenty employees enrolled and held the weekly Weight Watchers meeting after work. Although only about

six employees consistently attended the meetings through the 17 weeks, the group met its goal by collectively losing 200 pounds. When the first program ended, employees expressed interest in another. CIPROMS leadership agreed to allow the 45-minute weekly meetings to take place during business hours to demonstrate its support for employees' efforts and eliminate some participation barriers. Attendance improved, with approximately 15 employees consistently attending meetings for the second program at the new time. There was some pushback from other employees about providing paid work time to participate in the meetings. However, the wellness committee was able to convince those employees that they, too, might someday use work time to participate in a wellness activity.

Making Healthier Vending Options Available

The committee's strategies to address nutrition and physical activity complemented CIPROMS' weight management efforts. CIPROMS does not have an on-site cafeteria, but to make healthy eating at work an easier choice, the committee decided to improve the selection of food and drinks in the vending machines.

Starting with only a few healthier choices, the committee started working to make at least 25 percent of the vending machine options healthy. The committee met with vending machine representatives to discuss stocking healthier items and developed a written policy to make healthier choices available in the vending machines. In 2015, 62 percent of employees agreed that CIPROMS provided them with opportunities to eat a healthy diet, up from 39 percent in 2013. The committee organized a four-week fruit and vegetable challenge based on the one available through North Carolina's [Eat Smart, Move More](#) program. Nearly 25 percent of CIPROMS' employees participated. The wellness committee made it easy to do and offered small incentives. Employees accumulated points for practicing healthy eating tips and employees who earned at least 20 points received a \$10 gift card. Employees who earned at least 30 points were entered into a drawing for a larger gift card to a local health-food store. By the end of the NHWP, the percent of healthy vending items had increased from 10 percent to more than 50 percent, exceeding the committee's goal.

Implementing Low Cost Programs

The wellness committee adopted several tools and resources recommended by the NHWP and found others on its own. For example, it purchased the [WELCOA Health Trip](#) for \$239. This is an easy-to-use, week-by-week program designed to teach employees about different aspects of staying healthy, particularly how to increase their physical activity. Sixty-four employees signed up to participate and 26 used an online tracker to log their activity levels over the eight-week program, logging over 500 hours of physical activity.

The committee learned that competitive activities led to some negativity and mistrust among employees. For example, some employees questioned the validity of their co-workers' tracking logs. The committee applied the NHWP practice of gathering all types of employee feedback and using it to tailor programs to its worksite culture. It decided not to publicize competitions or activities that encourage employees to compare themselves or their behaviors to others.

Education and Information Comes from Many Sources

To showcase information about a variety of health topics, the committee created two wellness workstations in cubicles located in a high-traffic area.



CIPROMS wellness cube featuring the My Plate theme. Photo provided by CIPROMS.

Employees could stop by and peruse the materials whenever they had a free moment. One station featured a permanent collection of resources,

including a scale. The theme of the second wellness cube changed each month. The committee rotated the responsibility for the content by making two different committee members responsible for it each month. One month highlighted exercises that could be done during the workday; others were tied to a monthly theme, like summer safety (poison ivy, sun safety). One of the most popular themes was the "[My Plate](#)" theme, which the committee timed to coincide with the fruit and vegetable challenge, using resources from the web. The changing content kept employees interested.

The committee adopted and promoted a monthly health-promotion newsletter provided by Hylant. This was a smart way of leveraging a resource it already had, to continue getting health messages to employees. Each newsletter featured a healthy recipe incorporating the fruit or vegetable of the month. The committee posted the newsletter on CIPROMS' intranet and placed print copies in the break room and at wellness workstation.

Motivating Physical Activity and Goodwill

One of CIPROMS' most memorable and popular events was a 5K run it organized and held in the company parking lot for employees, family members, and vendors. Besides being a great opportunity for physical activity during and leading up to the event, the more powerful benefit of the 5K was the support and encouragement employees shared with one another. In their 2014 event, 32 employees, plus 32 family members and friends, walked or ran the

course. Every participant was encouraged by name with chalk messages the committee had drawn along the ground of the route. The committee was able to conduct the race at low cost because it offered sponsorship opportunities to vendors it worked with, and promoted the vendors' support on shirts the

committee created for the 5K. The committee raised \$800 from these sponsors to purchase shirts, healthy snacks, and water. CIPROMS posted pictures of the event on the company Facebook page, a positive marketing and recruiting strategy. The event was so popular, the committee wants to do it again.



CIPROMS employees, family and friends at the 2014 5K starting line.

Photo provided by CIPROMS.

During the course of CIPROMS' participation in NHWP, the committee started to adopt a more holistic approach to wellness. In addition to physical health, it also began to address employee stress by providing Stress Profiler booklets to all employees to help them assess their own stress levels as a first step. Bird obtained a set of stress management slides from CDC to present to employees during a staff meeting.

The committee developed a brand from the start and consistently kept CIPROMS Healthy Together in front of employees on the intranet site, in the wellness workstations, in break rooms and staff meeting updates. Employees are noticing that health is a priority at CIPROMS. In 2015, 96% agreed that CIPROMS' management considers workplace health and safety to be important and 69% agreed that their supervisor encouraged healthy behavior.

Program Success

Looking back on the first year of CIPROMS Healthy Together program, wellness committee members said that they feel they did something good. One committee member said, "There were some

employees who did not participate in the formal program activities, but they made positive health changes. It is likely due to the healthier environment."

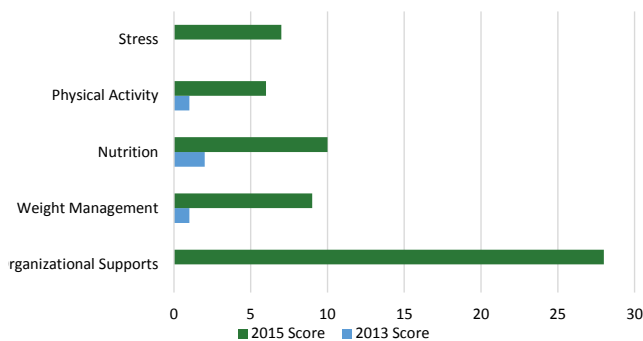
CIPROMS' 2015 results on the CDC Worksite Health ScoreCard showed growth from where the organization started in 2013. CIPROMS' score in 2015 was 156 out of a possible 264 points, compared to its score of 44 points in 2013. CIPROMS' Health ScoreCard indicates that the company has implemented evidence-based interventions and increased its scores for its goals areas of weight management, nutrition, physical activity and stress, as well as across the other ScoreCard modules. Some examples of the evidence-based strategies CIPROMS received points for in its 2015 ScoreCard that it did not have in place in 2013, included:

- Providing free or subsidized one-on-one or group lifestyle counseling for employees who are overweight or obese.
- Having a written policy or formal communication that makes healthier food and beverage choices available in vending machines or other purchase points be healthier choices.

- Offering or promoting on-site or nearby farmers' markets where fresh fruits and vegetables are sold.
- Providing education, seminars, workshops, or classes on physical activity.
- Providing training for managers on identifying and reducing workplace stress-related issues.

CIPROMS made the largest gains in its score for the Organizational Supports module, which assesses the extent to which organizations have a foundation and infrastructure in place to support and maintain a workplace health-promotion program. CIPROMS' 2015 ScoreCard reflected that its program now has an active wellness committee, leadership support, an annual budget, and is integrated into annual organizational objectives.

CDC Worksite Health ScoreCard Overall Score in Wellness Programming 2013-2015



In 2013, 85 employees completed the health assessments. In 2015, 51 employees completed the assessments, including 37 of the original 85 who were assessed in 2013. Employee participation in 2013 was higher than in 2015, possibly because of the excitement associated with CIPROMS beginning a new program. The assessment data related to the issues that the wellness committee focused its efforts on, are summarized in the tables below.

2013 Employee Health Issues and Lifestyle Risks Profile (Employees=55)	
Self-Reported Health Assessment Survey	
Health care provider diagnosed high blood pressure	31%
Eat at least 5 daily servings of fruits and vegetables	0%
Engage in little or no physical activity	77%
High stress	52%
Biometric Screening	
Body Mass Index: % Overweight (BMI between 25.0-29.9)	26%
Elevated Blood Pressure (systolic \geq 140 mmHg or diastolic \geq 90 mmHg)	15%

The percentage of employees eating the recommended daily amounts of fruits and vegetables was higher in 2015 than in 2013. The percentage of employees who were not physically active also was substantially lower, surpassing CIPROM's goal of a 5% reduction.

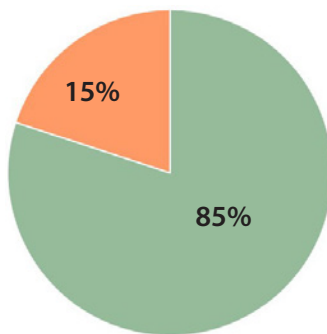
The 37 employees who completed both the 2013 and 2015 assessment showed improvements in some areas. The percentage of these employees who eat at least five daily servings of fruits and vegetables increased from zero to 19% and the percentage with elevated blood pressure decreased from 22% to 14%. These employees also improved their weight status (the percentage who were overweight decreased from 36% to 24% and levels of physical activity (the percentage who were inactive decreased from 65% in 2013 to 60% in 2015).

2015 Employee Health Issues and Lifestyle Risks Profile (Employees=51)*	
Self-Reported Health Assessment Survey	
Health care provider diagnosed high blood pressure	24%
Eat at least 5 daily servings of fruits and vegetables	16%
Engage in little or no physical activity	59%
High stress	51%
Biometric Screening	
Body Mass Index: % Overweight (BMI between 25.0-29.9)	22%
Elevated Blood Pressure (systolic \geq 140 mmHg or diastolic \geq 90 mmHg)	14%
<i>*Percentages include all employees who provided data in 2015, including those who did not complete the 2013 assessments.</i>	

For employees who have been diagnosed with high blood pressure, keeping those levels in a healthy range usually involves lifestyle changes and taking medication. Increasing the number of employees with hypertension who comply with their doctor's instructions to be treated with medication increases the number of employees with their blood pressure under control, reducing the risk of health problems and complications from this condition.

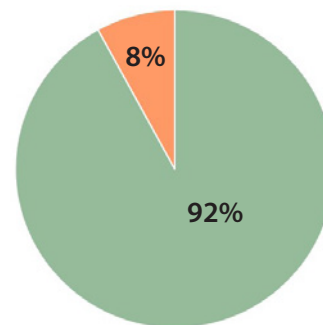
In 2013, 85% of CIPROMS employees who responded that they had been told they have high blood pressure by a health care provider reported that they were currently taking high blood pressure medication. In 2015, that percentage was 92%.

Percentage of employees treating diagnosed high blood pressure with medication in 2013



- Diagnosed and currently taking high blood pressure medication
- Diagnosed and not currently taking medications

Percentage of employees treating diagnosed high blood pressure with medication in 2015



- Diagnosed and currently taking high blood pressure medication
- Diagnosed and not currently taking medications

CIPROMS' insurance plan renewal cycle came up about 10 months into the company's program. It was very pleased to find that it had only a 6% increase in its cost, compared to the usual 12% increase. While it may be unrealistic to expect costs to go down after such a short time, CIPROMS did save money, compared to what it would have paid given the trend.

Insights from CIPROMS' Experience

Some factors that helped CIPROMS succeed were:

- A representative wellness committee with champions from multiple levels and departments.
- Strong and visible leadership commitment.
- Pervasive communications about the program.

“We really didn’t have anything formalized until the CDC program. We are where we are today because of the NHWP. It gave us the kick to get going and now we are committed to continuing.”

-Melissa Bird, CIPROMS Human Resources Vice President

Bird cited the wellness committee’s approach of considering employees’ needs at all levels of the organization (i.e., job type, department), rather than one-size-fits-all, as an important part of worksite health promotion planning and implementation. One of the key messages from the NHWP program

is that there is a continuum of change, and that the purpose of a program is to move employees along the continuum a little bit at a time, not necessarily from one end to the other in one step. As Bird puts it, “Change does not happen overnight!”

Challenges

The committee has worked hard, and despite Bird’s unflagging enthusiasm, some things have been difficult. Chiefly among them were shortages of time and money. No additional staff were brought in to work on the program. Wellness committee members had to balance program activities with their regular duties. The committee was working with a budget of about \$50 per employee per year, which challenged it to find creative solutions. The

members found low-cost and free resources available through government websites and made good use of materials and expertise provided through their insurance broker. CIPROMS also obtained vendor support for the big 5K event, and made a major effort to make it fun and special for employees with encouraging messages. The challenges the company is facing now are keeping the program fresh and maintaining employee engagement in activities.

What’s Next?

CIPROMS is committed to continuing to offer a healthy work environment for employees. Specifically, the company hopes to:

- Have another CIPROMS Healthy Together 5K.
- Organize a walking group.
- Capitalize on more community fitness events (e.g., runs, bike rides, and recreational sport

leagues) by promoting them and trying to organize CIPROMS teams to participate.

- Make enhancements to the metal stairwell to encourage more employees to take the stairs.
- Work with the company health insurer to analyze aggregate claims data to investigate whether employers are using fewer diabetes, cholesterol, and high-blood pressure medications.



The National Healthy Worksite Program was designed to help employers put into action science- and practice-based disease-prevention and wellness strategies that would lead to specific measurable health outcomes to reduce chronic disease rates. From 2013-2015, each participant received support, training, and technical assistance to put in place a combination of program, policy and environmental interventions to support physical activity, good nutrition and tobacco-use cessation.