



Washoe County Good Health Incentive Program

WASHOE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT,
WASHOE COUNTY, NV

Purpose

To improve employees' health by increasing their awareness of risk factors for chronic illness and implementing health promotion programs

Target Population

Washoe County School District employees and retirees

Goals

- Create better role models for students
- Reduce or stabilize the county's share of annual increases in health insurance costs
- Financially incentivize employees to participate in health-risk-reducing activities, while generating resources to support health promotion efforts

Years in Operation

1994 – present

Results

- Nonparticipants in the voluntary health programs had 20 percent higher rates of illness-related absenteeism than did employees who participated.³¹
- A cost-benefit analysis revealed that the school district saved \$15.60 for every dollar spent on the wellness programs. The program saved the district \$2.5 million in two years, and employees enjoyed dramatically improved health and quality of life.³²

Funding

The program is self-funded by the wellness contribution employees make monthly. Employees who participate in wellness activities can lower their contribution to \$0.

Over a 10-year period, the self-funded program has generated \$1.4 million. Annual program income in 2001 exceeded \$300,000, all largely generated by payments from people who decided not to participate in screenings or address risk factors. These funds support all of the district's health promotion activities, including educational activities, physical fitness programs, screenings, the employee assistance program, educational materials, professional consultation, and stipends for site coordinators.

No district or other public funds support the program.³³

Key Partners

Washoe County School District's Superintendent's Executive Cabinet; Washoe County School District's Insurance Committee

What Works and Why

Programs focused on a variety of population health activities, such as brushing and flossing teeth, sensible eating during the holidays, the importance of drinking enough water, reducing TV time, getting the right amount of sleep, exercising, seatbelt safety, brain functioning and fitness challenges. Individuals have financial incentives to participate.

Structure and Operations

All members and spouses of the district's health plan have a \$40 per month contribution to the Wellness Program. This contribution can be reduced to zero by engaging in healthy actions each year aimed at achieving ideal blood pressure, decreasing tobacco use and maintaining a healthy body mass index.

Every step taken toward improved health reduces the monthly contribution by \$10. For example, overweight employees who receive an annual health screening pay \$30 each month. If those same employees also participate in one of the program's weight loss activities, they pay \$20.

With up to eight annual activities, the program is funded mostly by the 7.5 percent of the district's employees who do not take any preventive health measures, and another 7.5 percent who pay a small contribution — roughly \$10 each month — for not addressing a specific health risk, such as high blood pressure. About 6,000 employees pay nothing, while the other 700 contribute \$40 per month.

Barriers to Success

This plan operates mostly on self-reporting — employees confirm their own participation in many of the wellness activities. Employee honesty is paramount to this program's success.

For More Information

Additional information is available online: <http://www.washoe.k12.nv.us/wellness/access.html>

