



**Memphis Business Group on Health
& Shelby County Health Department**
collaborate to improve health of employees

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In 2010 The Memphis Business Group on Health was one of seven employer coalitions in the nation to receive a Community Health Partnership Seed Grant from the National Business Coalition on Health and the Community Coalitions Health Institute. Here's what happened:

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Memphis Business Group on Health (MBGH) used the seed grant to join forces with the Shelby County Health Department (SCHD) to improve the health of employees by implementing the SCHD's "Move More Eat Better...It All Works Together Fitness Challenge" at MBGH member worksites.

The project was designed to overcome barriers SCHD had previously encountered in implementing the program at worksites and to provide employer and employee feedback to improve the program's relevance, effectiveness, and marketability.

Results:

The program was implemented in four Memphis-area worksites with 130 employee participants. Key findings included:

- unexpected ease of recruiting employers
- the eagerness of employees to register
- a lower than expected program completion rate
- minimal improvement in BMI and diastolic blood pressure
- overall high satisfaction of both employee participants and sponsoring employers.

Recommendations:

As a result of this initiative, MBGH recommends the following modifications to the program for worksite partners:

- limiting session size to build supportive culture
- structured participant recruitment
- session reminders
- visible coordinating staff
- inclusion of SCHD program as one component of an on-going, comprehensive worksite health promotion program
- development of employer reports providing feedback and priorities for comprehensive worksite programs

MBGH will continue to collaborate with SCHD to implement this program at other employer worksites.

PROJECT DRILL-DOWN WITH CRISTIE TRAVIS

In 2010 Memphis Business Group on Health (MBGH) used its seed grant to collaborate with

Shelby County Health Department (SCHD) to conduct the SCHD's health promotion program, "Move More Eat Better...It All Works Together Fitness Challenge", at four MBGH member employer sites.

This same program is offered by SCHD at community centers and churches, but historically, SCHD has had difficulty recruiting worksites for program.



We had close to 100% attendance. I recruited participants who I knew would benefit and contacted each employee's manager to make sure the employees were able to attend the meetings. It was a really good program, and our employees enjoyed it. One employee lost 20 pounds.

Kathy Richardson
Occupational Health Nurse,
Smith & Nephew, Inc.

What were you trying to achieve?

The purpose of this project was to:

- recruit employers and bring this program into the employer setting
- provide feedback to SCHD from both employees and employers regarding program satisfaction and effectiveness
- incorporate feedback into program design to ensure program relevance, effectiveness, and marketability to employer worksites
- increase partnership opportunities between MBGH and SCHD in working to improve the health of the population across the entire community by working with people where they naturally congregate, including the worksite

Were employers reluctant?

MBGH originally planned to recruit three employers and was able to recruit four and have five total sessions. An additional employer showed interest in the project after it began, but due to scheduling limitations, this employer was not able to participate.

Three employers offered one 6 - week session. The fourth employer offered the 6 - week session at two separate locations. In total, participating employees coordinated five six-week sessions.

Were employees resistant?

Employees were excited. Initial registrations at each site exceeded expectations. MBGH and employers were surprised by the number of employees interested in the program.

The program is designed to accommodate 15 - 20 participants. A total of 130 employees registered. Session sizes ranged from 16 employees at one employer to 62 employees at the employer offering two sessions. SCHD agreed to increase class size because employers did not want to turn away interested employees.

Did the ones who needed it take advantage of it?

Definitely, "Yes." Pre - program testing showed employers that employees in need of health improvement actually registered to participate.

- The percentage of participants with BMI > 25 ranged from a low of 82% to a high of 97%
- The percentage of participants with diastolic blood pressure ≥ 90 ranged from a low of 21% to a high of 50%.

How did it all work?

SCHD and University of Tennessee Extension Services conducted the six classes in each "Move More Eat Better...It All Works Together Fitness Challenge" session from June 2010 through October 2010.

Each 6 - week session included:

- Class 1: Pre - screening for height, weight, BMI, blood pressure
- Class 2: Obesity 101/Goal Setting
- Class 3: Diabetes Awareness
- Class 4: Healthy Eating Tips or Healthy Cooking Demonstration
- Class 5: Heart Health
- Class 6: Post - screening for height, weight, BMI, blood pressures

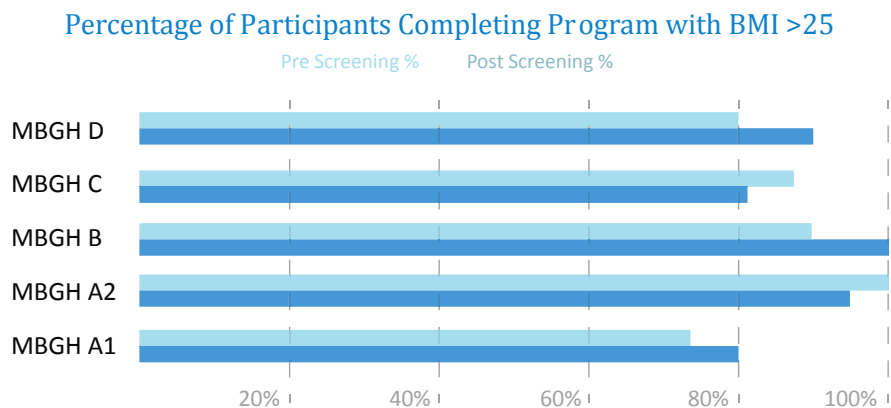
Was there a fun factor?

Program instructors provided small incentives, such as pedometers, hand sanitizers, tape measures, walker's guides, and memo pads at each session. A George Forman grill was awarded to the program participant at each worksite that lost the most weight.

Was there improvement?

Pre- and post- screening results for those that completed the program showed minimal improvement, which is impressive in just six weeks:

- Two employers saw a decrease in the percent of employees with BMI>25
- Two different employers saw a decrease in percent of employees with diastolic blood pressure ≥ 90 .



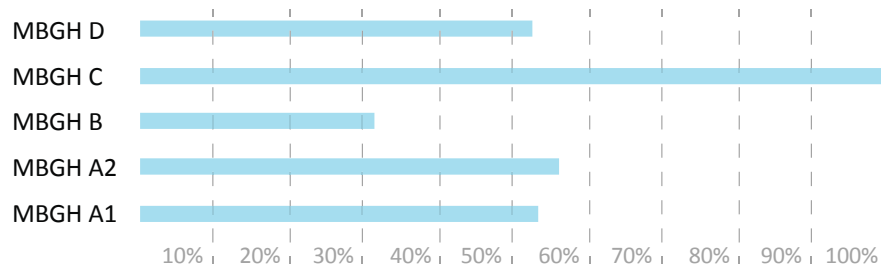
These changes were, for the most part, better than performance for the community centers and faith - based organizations, which SCHD typically serves.

How many people dropped out?

Of the 130 employees that registered and attended the first pre - screening session, 54% completed the program. Program completion rates differed by employer, ranging from a low of 30% to a high of 100%.

Although MBGH - member completion rates were somewhat disappointing to most employers, their completion rates were higher than completion rates from community centers and faith - based organizations (Non - MBGH), which averaged 36%.

Participants Completing Program



The one employer with the 100% completion rate recruited employees based on the worksite nurse's recommendation. In addition, the worksite nurse sent out regular session reminders and attended and participated in every session. She was very "visible" to the participating employees. Although this hands - on approach may not always be practical, it does seem to have had a significant impact on program participation and completion.

One employer surveyed participants who dropped out of the program. Reasons cited for not continuing in the program included:

- Work schedule
- Other commitments
- Sick leave or vacation

Did employees like it?

Participants evaluated the program and were very pleased. Overall results for all employers combined were:

- Employees were very pleased with the knowledge gained (95%) and the usefulness of the information (93%)
- The highest ranking session was the Heart Health session (91%) followed closely by the Diabetes Awareness session (89%)
- The vast majority (67%) felt the program length was "just right" and 33% believed it was "too short".
- No participants indicated that the program was "too long".

Did employers like it?

All employers reported they would offer the program again to their employees and believed that the program was the right length. Additional findings from the employer survey include:

- The Heart Health session was the most highly ranked followed closely by the Diabetes Awareness session. These results mirror exactly the results from the employee survey.
- The variety of topics and the knowledge gained were identified as the most valuable aspects of the program.

Employers identified additional topics they thought could be included in future programs:

- Long - term weight control
- Bone and joint health
- Healthy meal planning
- More information on blood pressure control
- Exercise

What would you do differently next time?

Keep groups small - Based on the completion rate and other program components, it is probably best to limit registration to 15 - 20 participants and schedule a second session for others that are interested. Class size may have contributed to lower completion rates.

Appoint a leader/herder - Ideally, the program would have a worksite nurse or “championing” employee to distribute regular session reminders and participate in every session. Having a visible and engaged point person may make a significant impact on program participation and completion.

Think like a business - The SCHD program does not include any feedback reports for the sponsoring organization (in this case the employer). Additionally, there are no formal analyses of pre- and post- testing or of the participant feedback surveys to measure program impact.

Historically, the program focused on individual impact and not organizational impact. Employers expect to receive employer - specific reports and need these reports to evaluate program effectiveness and return on investment. MBGH has offered to help SCHD develop standard employer reports to capture the information business partners crave.



Is your worksite up for it?

If you know a company ready to try this free program, contact Cristie Travis at ctravis@memphisbusinessgroup.org.



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