Promising and Best Practices in the Integration of Occupational Safety and Health Protection with Health Promotion in Small Businesses

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Overview

• **My perspectives**
  – As a small business owner
  – As a physician and public health “R2P”ractitioner
  – As a researcher studying small business adoption of Total Worker Health™

• **Lessons from our research on small business**

• **Lessons from the first 100 Health Links™ Certified Healthy Businesses**
  – Case studies of integration by small businesses
Questions Posed for this Panel

• How approaching integration?
• What would it look like *ideally*?
• What are the innovative approaches?
• What are the barriers?
  – And what are the strategies to overcome barriers?
• Are there different approaches for different workforces?
Lesson from research on small businesses: There’s not a lot to rely on

- McCoy et al. Health promotion in small business: A systematic review of factors influencing adoption and effectiveness of worksite wellness programs. JOEM (in press)
- Broad search: 84 retrieved articles on companies <500 employees through July 2013
- Rigor: WHO GRADEprofiler “quality of evidence”
- 19 met study criteria
- 2 studies were high rigor
- Even less known about integration of health promotion and health protection in small businesses
Community-based Intervention:
Learning more about what works for small businesses
Bring Wellness to Work.

Organizations that foster health and safety at work have healthier, happier employees—and healthier bottom lines, too. It’s more than good business. It’s a good business strategy.

Lana Stinchcomb, San Isabel Electric Association

A wellness at work success story »

Get Informed »
Learn about worksite wellness and read the Health Links™ story.

Get Certified »
Earn recognition through our Health Links™ Healthy Business Certification program.

Get Funded »
Our Kick-Start Program can get you started with seed money and coaching.

Get Connected »
Find local resources and vendors, and connect with other like-minded businesses.
Colorado Health Links™

Local Partnerships & Collaborations

[Logos of various organizations]
How it Works:
www.HealthLinksColorado.org

• Examines both Health and Safety
  – Total Worker Health (NIOSH)
• Small Businesses
  – Emphasis is for those with less than 500 employees
  – Open to all size businesses
• Main components are:
  – Certification
  – Education & Advising
  – Funding
  – Information and Resources
Why Small Business?

• 130,297 Small Employer Firms in Colorado
• 1- 49 employees = 96% of small businesses
• They employ a majority of workers
• Currently no programs specifically geared towards them to improve worker health
The Challenge: Establishing Interventions in Safety and Wellness That Are:

- Evidence-based
- Beneficial
- Equitable
- Sustainable
- Coordinated
Bring Wellness To Work.

Healthy Business Success Stories
May 22, 2014
San Isabel Electric Association, Pueblo, Colorado

- 85 employees
- Yearly Health Fair
- Annual Health Survey
- Offer Incentives
- “Health Positive” Building
- Ongoing Education
- Established safety program
San Isabel Electric Association, Inc.

“Giving our employees the tools to stay healthy, both physically and emotionally, is a benefit to them and to our members, since it results in a healthier, happier, more productive workforce.”
“We think the success of the wellness program shows in the success of the business. . .By investing in fun and healthy events. . .we create a workplace where people want to be.”
“The health and wellness of our employees is important, because a healthy employee is a happy employee.”
“Healthier employees are happier; they can focus more on the tasks at hand. Creating this program often has the side effect of employees participating together in healthy activities and building camaraderie.”
“This community foundation uses their wellness program as a camaraderie-building tool – inspiring fitness and fun through participation in community-cultural events.”
“We instill and support the importance of health and wellness for employees by offering a holistic wellness program. . .we help our employees achieve their health and wellness goals by evaluating their needs and offering several different events that align with their goals.”
Wellness is important because it provides a more balanced work environment for everyone. Our overall vision is to promote a more balanced lifestyle. We want to create a place to give people the chance to be everything they've always wanted to be.
Colorado Health Institute

“Caring for other human beings includes making sure they are healthy at work. We want people to be happy and have a good work-life balance.”

Vail Vitality Center

“It is important that our employees are happy and healthy and are provided with an environment that allows them to find balance in their lives.”
Overview

• Bullet 1
• Bullet 2
Overview

• Bullet 1
• Bullet 2
Overview

• Bullet 1
• Bullet 2
How are you approaching integration?

- Applying a simple framework that installs a system for wellness management and safety management

- Basing the decision on what already exists in the organization:
  - If there’s nothing in place: Integrate from the get-go
  - If there’s something good in place in either safety or wellness: replicate and integrate
  - If there’s something good in place in both safety and wellness: Carefully assess whether there are real benefits to integration before proceeding.

  - Start by improving communication across silos
What would it look like *ideally*?

- *We’d have better evidence for small businesses on:*
  - *What works*
  - *When it will work*
  - *What keeps it working*
  - *And when integration should or should not be pursued*
  - *When we can legitimately extrapolate from the experience of big business*
What are the innovative approaches?

As a small business it is innovative if:

• You address both safety and wellness at all (whether or not they are integrated)
• If you examine needs before jumping in
• If you evaluate outcomes in order to do process improvement

As public health practitioners, its innovative if:

• You recognize that “one size does not fit all”
• You recognize that establishing the system is more important than any individual challenge, program, event or game
• You recognize when to promote safety, when to promote health, and when to promote both
What are the small business barriers?

• From the research literature:
  – Direct cost
  – Indirect costs (time and staff)
  – Fewer resources
  – Facilities
  – Expertise
  – No plausible ROI, less perceived return for the investment
    • *(especially if not offering health insurance, not self-insured)*
  – Employee privacy
  – Paternalism/labor relations
  – Targeted interventions benefit small numbers of employees
What are the small business barriers?
My additional observations:

- Economic stress: it trumps wellness and it trumps safety
- Not viewed as component of a sustainable business model
- Health literacy
- Safety literacy
- Information overload
- Vulnerability: Vendors promoting unproven services and products
- Past failures and false starts
- Wellness deserts: Its not profitable to service small businesses
What are the strategies to overcome barriers?

- Prioritize: where do I start?
- Simplify, simplify, simplify
- Adopt a system not a program
- Establish personal contact with trustworthy advisors
- Access vetted local resources, preferably at low cost
- Social network: Find role models in the business community
- Find ‘value proposition’ in qualitative rewards, not so much “ROI”
  - Hiring, retention, absenteeism, happiness, satisfaction, community recognition, identity as a socially responsible community member
Are there different approaches for different workforces?

• Yes. Fundamentally, the approach to integration and program execution hinges on establishing priorities for optimizing the net wellbeing of the most number of employees:
  
  – How significant are the occupational hazards?
  – How significant are the population’s health risks?
  – If you had to choose one priority: will you ‘lead’ with safety or “lead” with wellness?

• The rest are just complicated logistical challenges: culture, ethnicity, age, location, wage, geography, shift
Are there different approaches for different workforces?

• Other approaches may be needed to address: culture, ethnicity, language, age, location, wage, geography, shiftwork…

• But there’s not much small business-specific evidence to rely on to justify ‘different approaches’
Conclusions

Small businesses are not just “little big businesses” when it comes to safety and health.

They need both health promotion and health protection.

There are unique barriers to adoption and to successful, sustainable programs.

There are success stories, but one size does not fit all.

There’s a need for intervention research to provide evidence to replace guesswork and unproven practices.
Thank You

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Some of our many enthusiastic Colorado Partners
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Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
Eagle County Public Health
Healthy Communities Coalition
Pueblo City-County Health Department
Pueblo Greater Chamber of Commerce
Pueblo Latino Chamber of Commerce
Kaiser Permanente Weigh and Win Program
Parkview Medical Center
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