Program Evaluation Approaches, Successes, and Lessons Learned from the Massachusetts Working on Wellness (WoW) Program

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Program Evaluation Approaches, Successes, and Lessons Learned from the Massachusetts Working on Wellness (WoW) Program

Laura Sefton, MPP, on behalf of the MA WoW Evaluation Team

Overview
The Massachusetts “Working on Wellness” (WoW) program is a two-year capacity building program that provides training and seed funding to employers to expand employee health promotion and prevention activities.

UMass Lowell and UMass Medical School have collaborated to:
- Provide data collection and management support;
- Produce reports for employer wellness planning; and
- Conduct a formal independent program evaluation.

The goals of the evaluation were to:
- Determine if the program was implemented as intended;
- Provide just-in-time feedback to program implementers; and
- Determine if the program had the desired benefits.

Methods
The WoW program evaluation used a mixed-method approach. Qualitative and quantitative data collection instruments were used to measure key program outputs and outcomes, and to make pre/post-intervention comparisons.

Data Source | Key Measures
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Application & Onboarding Surveys | Workforce demographics; Organizational characteristics
Needs & Interests Survey | Employee health conditions, health behaviors, & wellness topic interests
Environmental Scan | Employer wellness policies & programs at baseline
Action Plan | Planned interventions; Wellness resources; Community partners
Evaluation Report | Implemented programs; Employee reach; Costs; Collaborations
All Payer Claims Database | Healthcare utilization & expenditures; Disease burden
Program Delivery Team Interviews | Successes; Challenges; Recommendations
Wellness Champion Interviews | Usefulness; Satisfaction; Challenges; Sustainability

Data were collected from four cohorts of employers (employees and wellness champions) at specific points along the program development cycle.

Results
Curriculum and Technical Support
The WoW Program successfully delivered services to employers that did not have comprehensive wellness programs.
- Peer learning opportunities, quality of Expert Series, and online curriculum provided to employers were highly-rated.
- Tools provided by the program delivery team were useful for creating employers’ programs.
- A majority of wellness programs are likely to be sustained after WoW program end.

Actionable Information for Program Development
- Data on employee health status and wellness interests guided employers’ program development.
- Two-thirds of employees reported having 2 or more of 9 risk factors, including overweight, insufficient exercise, low fruits/vegetables, hypertension, and stress.

Planned Health Targets for Wellness Interventions
Employers’ planned programs are based on their employees’ reported health risks, wellness topic interests, and readiness to make changes.

Lessons Learned
- The WoW program served as a catalyst for employers to implement evidence-based worksite wellness programs.
- Evaluation was conducted concurrent with implementation and supported both program and employer efforts.
- Diverse outcomes reported in external literature made it challenging to summarize future program benefits.
- Data collection with employers and employees at least 1 year beyond the end of the 12-month WoW program is needed to assess health and business impacts.
- Future analysis will leverage the All Payer Claims Database to evaluate changes in health care utilization and expenditures.

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