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

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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.

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.

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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