



How School-Based Health Centers Can Support School Staff Wellness

Definition of Staff Wellness:

Staff wellness can be defined as anything an employer or organization does to keep their staff members healthy. By encouraging staff wellness, sick days can be decreased, insurance costs can be lowered, and employee retention can be increased. Additionally, a healthy school staff can act as role models for the health of their students.¹

Attending to the health of teachers and school staff not only supports these valuable and hard-working professionals, it can improve student health. School staff act as role models for healthy behavior and create better learning environments when they are healthier and less stressed. School-based health centers (SBHCs) have an opportunity to lead staff wellness initiatives that create a culture of health and wellness, build strong partnerships with school sites, and increase clinic utilization. By providing staff wellness services to your school campus, your SBHC will become more integrated into the school you serve, in turn adding value and sustainability to your SBHC.

¹ Alliance for a Healthier Generation. (2014). Facts on Health Promotion for Staff. Retrieved on January 21, 2016.

Staff Wellness: Examples & Recommendations

Many options exist for SBHCs to implement staff wellness initiatives. The following examples are organized from low cost, easy to implement to examples that require dedicated staff time.

Case Study: Check Your Heart Day

Preparation: The Logan Health Center (LHC) in Union City wanted to better engage teachers with their SBHC. They surveyed teachers and discovered that many of them wanted to use health services at LHC. One of the health needs identified in the survey was preventive services, such as immunizations and blood pressure checks. With the help of school partners, LHC staff implemented a “Check Your Heart Day” to coincide with Valentine’s Day.

Implementation: The LHC promoted the day through putting flyers in teachers’ mailboxes, sending them email reminders, and presenting during a monthly staff meeting. On “Check Your Heart Day,” the LHC Medical Assistant set up a table in the staff lounge, a convenient and comfortable place for staff to access this resource. The LHC did not host this event in their SBHC, making sure that the students’ space and confidentiality was maintained.

Next Steps: “Check Your Heart Day” was so popular amongst school staff, the staff at the LHC decided to make it an annual occurrence.

Simple, Low-Cost Ideas

The following examples can be easily incorporated into the responsibilities of an SBHC health educator or site director with little or no cost to your SBHC.

- Create a monthly or quarterly staff wellness newsletter to be sent out via email or staff mailboxes. The newsletters can include staff wellness tips such as healthy recipes or relaxation techniques. Consider including a profile of a teacher who champions health or supports your SBHC.
- Stuff staff mailboxes during the winter with “Staff Wellness Packs” that include tea, tissues, cough drops, and other wellness promoting items.
- Ask to have a dedicated health space in the teachers’ lounge sponsored by your SBHC. Fill the space with health brochures, posters, and a place to relax.
- Host a staff appreciation day. Provide healthy snacks in the teacher’s lounge or during a staff meeting.
- Distribute a list of local organizations and health services that staff can access for free or low cost. This can include mental health services, yoga classes, or locations to get flu shots.
- Provide trainings on preventing burnout, vicarious trauma, healthy eating, or stress reduction.



Case Study: Weight Loss Challenge

Preparation: The San Fernando High School Teen Health Center in San Fernando surveyed school staff on wellness activities at their school as part of their work as a Kaiser Hallways to Health site. They administered this survey electronically over the course of two months at the beginning of the year. With over 70 respondents, the San Fernando High School Teen Health Center staff discovered that many teachers wanted more opportunities for physical activity and healthy snack options at school-sponsored meetings. The health center staff shared their results with their administrative ally, the Vice Principal, who asked the health center staff to host a weight loss challenge at the beginning of January, to coincide with New Year's resolutions.

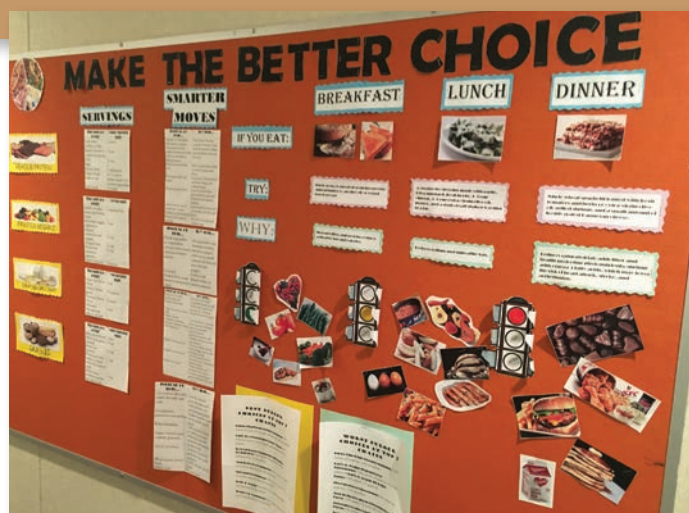
Implementation: The health center staff began promoting the weight loss challenge through their weekly "Wellness Wednesday" newsletter and recruited 20 teachers to participate. The health center provided a space for teachers to weigh themselves on SBHC scales and provided resources on alternative healthy snacks as well as low cost physical activity opportunities.

Next Steps: The San Fernando High School Teen Health Center staff will continue to implement the weight loss challenge on an annual basis for school staff.



Increase Your Impact

- Host an annual or per semester medical clinic day for staff. Services can include TB Tests, blood pressure checks, and flu shots.
- Create a monthly healthy food potluck club for staff.
- Start a fitness club with staff. A fitness club can be anything from a lunchtime walking club to regular Zumba classes.
- Partner or contract with a local studio or school to provide free meditation, yoga classes, massages, or spa services for staff.
- Create water stations for staff and distribute SBHC branded water bottles.
- Explicitly include staff wellness in the school and district wellness policies.
- Advocate for a policy that healthy foods will be provided at all district related gatherings, including staff meetings and teacher work days.
- Support a policy through nutrition/food services to provide lunch to staff for free or at a discounted rate.
- Lead wellness activities at school staff meetings (e.g., mindfulness, meditation, or stretch breaks) and advocate for these activities to be incorporated into meeting agendas.



Case Study: Healthy Drinking Water Station

Preparation: The JFK Student Health & Enrichment Center in Richmond wanted to promote alternatives to sweetened beverages on their school campus. Although vending machines had been removed from campus many years prior, they noticed that many students and staff were not drinking water because the water fountains were in disrepair or thought to be “dirty.” The health center staff worked with their youth advisory board to survey school staff on whether or not teachers and administrators would drink water from an alternative source, such as a water station. After reviewing the survey results and getting support from their principal, they decided to write a grant to Jamba Juice, to have two water stations created on campus, one for students near the SBHC and one for teachers in their lounge.

Implementation: The JFK Student Wellness & Enrichment Center staff received the grant from Jamba Juice and bought two water stations. They are currently working with the school district to install the water stations.

Next Steps: Once installed, the SBHC staff will post a sign stating: “Fresh water, provided to you by the JFK Student Wellness & Enrichment Center.” Additionally the health center staff are hoping to order SBHC branded water bottles to distribute to staff.

Key Steps for SBHCs

1. **Get buy-in** from administrators and key staff who will support your efforts.
2. **Assess staff needs** through a survey or key informant interviews.
3. Review the results and **create an action plan** with your school partner.
4. **Do something and start small!** Create your first health newsletter, provide a healthy snack in the teacher's lounge, or host a fitness class.
5. **Obtain feedback**, adjust your approach, and keep trying.
6. Make it a **regular practice** and choose projects or activities that can happen again. Although it is wonderful to have a massage day for teachers, you and your staff should examine budgets to see if this can be an annual occurrence.

Additional Resources for SBHCs

Kaiser Permanente: Thriving Schools

As part Kaiser Permanente's ongoing commitment to improve community health, they have partnered with leading national organizations on their Thriving Schools initiative, a comprehensive effort to create a culture of health and wellness for students, staff and teachers in K-12 schools. They have a dedicated section for employee wellness and host informative webinars regularly.

<http://thrivingschools.kaiserpermanente.org/wellness-resources/school-employee-wellness/>

Alliance for a Healthier Generation:

The Alliance for a Healthier Generation has lead the way to address healthy eating and active living nationwide. Their goal is to foster healthy changes that build upon one another and create a system that makes the healthy choice the easy choice. Their website features a section dedicated to Employee Wellness with many ideas to implement staff wellness initiatives.

https://www.healthiergeneration.org/take_action/schools/employee_wellness/

