

Participating in CDC's Work@Health® Program

Before participating in the Work@Health® program, Angie Grabko was the only person involved in developing and implementing SciMetrika's health promotion activities. She helped support a healthy work environment, but the company did not have a formal program in which efforts were coordinated or cohesive. For instance, SciMetrika had a no-smoking policy on campus, and provided reimbursements for gym memberships and Weight Watchers® classes, but these efforts were not linked together in a comprehensive program.

SciMetrika also participated in Blue Cross and Blue Shield's (BCBS) Healthy Outcomes program, which supports employee health by providing personal outreach and health coaching for covered employees.

Well-designed, science-based, and comprehensive workplace wellness programs can have a positive effect on health and financial outcomes. The [Work@Health®](#) program was designed to train employers how to improve the health of their workers and their families through science-based prevention and wellness strategies using interventions that address chronic health conditions. Grabko heard about the Work@Health® training program through SciMetrika's health benefits broker. She participated in the program's hands-on training session in Raleigh, North Carolina, in June 2014.

With training and effort, employers of all sizes and types can plan and put into action a workplace health program. Employers can learn from the experiences of employers like SciMetrika about how to plan strategies and anticipate implementation challenges.

After the training, participants in Work@Health® received 6-10 months of technical assistance in the form of coaching, webinars, and forums for interaction with other employer participants.

Grabko especially liked the ongoing support she received from technical assistance provider after the day-long workshop, and found the resources and materials provided to be helpful in her efforts to expand and better coordinate SciMetrika's health program offerings.

Organization Background

SciMetrika

- « Established in 2001
- « Private firm
- « Industry sector: professional, scientific, and technical services
- « Locations: Research Triangle Park, North Carolina; Atlanta, Georgia; and Washington, DC
- « 115 employees
- « 70% Female, 30% Male

SciMetrika is a privately held scientific and public health research organization focused solely on improving human health. The executive team and a multidisciplinary staff of public health and technical professionals bring rigor and innovation to solve complex population health challenges. Their work spans the disciplines of statistics and epidemiology, health behavior and health education, program development and program evaluation, technical assistance, management consulting, and health information technology. SciMetrika is dedicated to advancing population health, and that includes its own employees. Human Resources Director Angie Grabko serves as SciMetrika's worksite health promotion program coordinator.

Through the training, she learned the importance of having a structured and organized plan for her worksite health promotion activities. She also learned the most effective plans emphasize creating a healthy workplace culture by integrating environmental supports and policy changes with lifestyle programs designed to improve individual employees' health behaviors. Together, these form a more comprehensive approach to maximize employees' access and opportunities to make lifestyle changes.

The worksite health promotion experts at Grabko's training session were able to walk her through each step to develop and implement a program, and to direct her toward resources to support each step.

Program Overview

Forming a Wellness Committee

After participating in the Work@Health® training, Grabko realized she could not successfully tackle SciMetrika's health promotion efforts single-handedly. She surveyed SciMetrika employees about their willingness to serve on a new SciMetrika wellness committee and many expressed interest. She selected six volunteers from the offices in Durham, Atlanta, and Washington, DC, who had all been active in worksite health activities. In selecting committee members, Grabko chose a good cross-section of employees from different locations, organizational units, and job types to increase engagement at all worksites.

The committee meets monthly during paid work time. It has accomplished several things in its first year. It branded the worksite health promotion program Well4Life. To enhance staff buy-in, the committee held a contest among employees to design a program logo. Then it developed a program plan using health assessment data from its BCBS health plan. The committee analyzed the data and matched it to what it learned about employees' interests in worksite health promotion from the annual health interest survey it conducted after the Work@Health® training.

Setting Priorities on the Basis of Needs and Interests

Applying program planning strategies from the Work@Health® curriculum, the committee used results from the annual employee interest survey

Employers selected to participate in Work@Health® were assigned to one of three models, all of which delivered the same comprehensive workplace health curriculum.

1. The hands-on model was an on-site instructor-led one-day training workshop held in one of six regional locations.
2. The online model allowed employers to progress through the curriculum independently over several weeks using a web-based learning platform.
3. The blended model included a combination of hands-on and online learning strategies.

SciMetrika Employee Health Strategies

Policies

- No Smoking Policy.
- Healthy Catering Policy.
- Gym Reimbursement.

Programs

- Smoking Cessation Program.
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
- Weight Watchers® Offering.
- 10,000 Step Challenge.
- Lunch and Learn Sessions.
- Health Coaching Through Blue Cross Blue Shield.

Environmental Supports and Materials

- Healthy Snacks in Break Rooms.
- Onsite Nutritionist.
- Produce Box Delivery Through Community.
- Supported Agriculture (CSA).
- Treadmill Desks.
- Monthly Wellness Newsletter.
- Wellness Brochures.

to implement strategies targeting three key areas: healthy eating, physical activity, and stress management. The committee wanted to make sure the strategies that were developed would achieve specific health outcomes for its employees. To accomplish this, the planning involved creating SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, time-bound) goals for each area and creating an implementation timeline. Two SMART goals it set were increasing physical activity by 25% and reducing the number of employees who use tobacco products by 10% by January 2015. The wellness committee developed an implementation timeline to provide a quick snapshot of the entire program, which has been a useful planning tool for the committee.

Focus on Healthy Eating

To increase healthy eating, the committee developed a healthy catering policy for all on-site meetings. It also replaced the high-sugar and high-fat snacks in the breakroom with healthy snacks, and organized a weekly produce box program that delivers fresh produce to the workplace for employees who sign up to participate. SciMetrika also invited nutritionists and health educators from BCBS in North Carolina to do lunch-and-learn presentations. Some topics that have been presented include holiday eating and stress management.

The nutritionists also provide one-on-one consultations with employees in person or over the phone, as a covered benefit in their health insurance plan. SciMetrika also pays for the nutritionist consultations for those employees not covered by the company's health insurance plan.

Increasing Physical Activity One Step at a Time



SciMetrika's Step Challenge "Wall of Fame."
Photo provided by SciMetrika.

To increase employees' physical activity, the wellness committee started a step challenge to encourage all employees to take at least 10,000 steps each day.

To support the challenge, SciMetrika purchased \$11 pedometers for each employee. Employees who reached

different milestones received \$25 gift cards for their participation and a \$200 donation to a charitable organization. As of July 2015, SciMetrika had distributed \$500 in gift card prizes. At the end of the program, SciMetrika will hold a drawing for a wearable health tracking device and several gift cards. The grand prize for the drawing is a wearable tracking device. The second-place prize will be a \$75 gift certificate for Dick's Sporting Goods and third prize is a \$50 gift certificate. The Work@Health® curriculum emphasized the power of recognition as an incentive. SciMetrika's wellness committee prominently featured the top steppers on the company's Intranet site and step challenge "wall of fame." As of July 2015, SciMetrika had 27% overall active participation in the Step Challenge, including 100% of employees at the Washington, DC, location, 45% of employees at the Durham location, and 12% at the Atlanta location.

The wellness committee also changed the work environment to promote physical activity at work by purchasing treadmill desks that SciMetrika employees can sign up to use in the North Carolina and Atlanta offices. Grabko used seed funding provided through the Work@Health® program for the purchase of the walking workstations, and she planned to purchase more of them if employee feedback was positive.



Walking Workstation at SciMetrika.
Photo provided by SciMetrika.

Addressing Stress

The wellness committee's third focus area was employee stress. The employee interest survey data indicated that several of the employee's top concerns were stress management and financial wellness. The wellness committee held a workshop to explain the connections between eating, exercise, and stress. The committee also invited the company's 401K vendor to

present a webinar on retirement savings, credit-card debt, and other financial management issues. Forty percent of employees attended the sessions. Before Work@Health®, Grabko was unaware of some of the free resources and services provided by vendors on topics such as stress management that could be used to enhance SciMetrika's health promotion program.

Using the CDC Worksite Health ScoreCard to Identify Evidence-Based Interventions

Finally, Grabko worked with her Work@Health® technical assistance provider, and used a planning and implementation checklist tool and the [CDC Worksite Health ScoreCard](#), both included in

Program Success

Like all of the employers participating in Work@Health®, SciMetrika used the [CDC Worksite Health ScoreCard](#) to assess how it had evidence-based health promotion strategies in place before it started the program in 2014 and again at the end of the program in 2015. The strategies in the ScoreCard cover health promoting counseling services, environmental supports, policies, health plan benefits, and other worksite programs shown to be effective in preventing heart disease, stroke, and related health conditions.

SciMetrika more than tripled its total ScoreCard score to 210 from 54 out of a possible 264 points. The company showed most improvement in the number of evidence-based strategies it offered on nutrition, physical activity, stress management, and depression.

Examples of evidence-based strategies SciMetrika put in place during their Work@Health® training using the ScoreCard that it did not have in place in 2014, included:

- Having a written policy or formal communication that makes healthier food and beverage choices available in vending machines.
- Subsidizing or providing discounts on healthier foods and beverages offered in vending machines, cafeterias, snack bars, and other purchase points.
- Providing or subsidizing physical fitness assessments, follow-up counseling, and exercise recommendations, either onsite or through a community exercise facility.

the Work@Health® resources, to determine what additional policies and supports SciMetrika could put in place. The Health ScoreCard provided evidence-based strategies that have been proven to affect employee health.

Using the Health ScoreCard as a guide, Grabko expanded the no-smoking policy to include e-cigarettes, and also offered smoking-cessation reimbursement for FDA-approved medications through BCBS, in addition to its implementation of other wellness policies like the healthy catering policy.

- Providing organized individual or group physical activity programs.
- Providing stress management programs.
- Providing training for managers on identifying and reducing workplace stress-related issues.

SciMetrika more than tripled its score in the Organizational Supports Module that assesses how organizations have a foundation in place to support and maintain a workplace health promotion program. Notably, SciMetrika's 2015 ScoreCard indicated that its program now has an active health promotion committee and an annual budget or dedicated funding for health promotion programs.

CDC Worksite Health ScoreCard Overall Score in Wellness Programming 2014-2015



The Health ScoreCard is a free tool available to any employer interested in assessing how comprehensive its workplace health promotion and

disease prevention program is, to identify program gaps, and to prioritize investments for a number of health topics.

Learning from Work@Health®

Immediately following the full-day Work@Health® training session in Raleigh, North Carolina, all of the participants in the session with Grabko indicated they understood how to apply what they learned in the training to their jobs and 95% said they would be able to use what they learned from the training at their jobs. After completing the technical assistance portion of the program, all participants were asked to list the top three lessons they learned from the Work@Health® program. For Grabko they were:

1. Planning and implementing a health promotion program is time consuming, but an important step in the process.
2. The true return-on-investment for a program will take time to be realized.
3. You need support from top management to be successful.

In November 2014, at the end of the technical-assistance period following the training, participants from the Raleigh session were also asked what they did with the information they learned in the program.

How Work@Health® Trainees in Raleigh, NC Hands-On Model Are Using the Information They Learned in the Work@Health Program	
	Percentage of Participants
Shared it with others in my organization.	73%
Collected data to develop worksite health program.	60%
Engaged leadership for support.	53%
Developed a worksite health plan and have begun to take action.	40%

The Importance of Leadership Support

Grabko doesn't believe that any of the enhancements to SciMetrika's workplace health promotion program would have occurred had she not participated in Work@Health®. What she learned about creating a wellness committee helped her get the support she needed to not only maintain, but to expand worksite health promotion efforts.

The leadership support she receives also has played an instrumental role in the expansion of the program. The CEO of the company is very supportive, and as the leader of a public health organization, he takes a

great interest in ensuring that SciMetrika employees have the opportunity to be healthy at work.

Grabko also attributes SciMetrika's success to its employees' commitment to health. She estimated that 80% of SciMetrika's employees have master of public health degrees. As a member of the senior leadership team, Grabko was able to talk about worksite health promotion efforts at each "team huddle." She now has a dedicated budget for worksite health promotion and SciMetrika's 2015 benefit-renewal report showed no increase in health insurance claims. In fact, claims were below average, resulting in no increases in monthly premiums.

Challenges

SciMetrika's wellness committee has found it challenging to engage geographically dispersed employees in health promotion activities. The committee has tried to address this challenge

by using the company's Intranet site, SciNet. It developed a page dedicated to health and wellness. On it, the committee posts program information, including a wellness calendar of events, so that all SciMetrika locations have access. Grabko also

purchased monthly newsletters through WELCOA to post on SciNet. The wellness committee learned from the 2015 employee survey that 80% of employees preferred to receive information through e-mail versus SciNet. This was important information for the committee's communication planning.

In many instances described above, Grabko and the committee used data to make decisions related to program decisions. The committee tried healthy

vending, but found employees weren't using the vending machine for healthy snacks. As a result, SciMetrika replaced the unhealthy snacks in the breakroom with free healthy snacks. Grabko realized the committee should have done some research before making changes and it would have learned that employees weren't willing to pay for healthier vending options.

What's Next?

Over the next 12 months, SciMetrika has planned the following activities for worksite health promotion:

- Continue enhancing the program and using survey results to tailor efforts, such as how to address chronic health issues on the basis of the results from their most recent health risk assessment.
- Consider purchasing more exercise equipment, like the treadmill desk, that will allow employees to get more physical activity at work.
- Offer a SciMetrika weight loss challenge.
- Offer workplace meditation.
- Develop a healthy cookbook with recipes submitted by employees and their families.
- Strengthen and expand current activities.



The Work@Health® employer-training program is an initiative of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to promote workplace wellness through employer education, training, and technical assistance. Work@Health® training provides employers with the knowledge and tools through a comprehensive curricula to promote good health in their work places to prevent or reduce chronic illness and disability, and improve productivity.