

Creating Workplace Environments to Combat Obesity

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- **Contribution of an Environmental Approach from a Behavioral Perspective**
- **Components of Comprehensive Workplace Health Promotion Program**
- **Strategies to Create Supportive Workplace Environment**
- **Review of Empirical Support**

Value of an Environmental Approach from a Behavioral Perspective

- Educational approaches remain the most popular approach but have limited impact on most people
- Environmental Approaches Reach all Levels of Readiness to Change
 - Precontemplation Never 40%
 - Contemplation Later 40%
 - Preparation Soon 20%
 - Action Now
 - Maintenance Trying to be forever
 - Termination Probably forever

Components of Comprehensive Workplace Health Promotion Program

- Awareness
- Behavior Change
- Supportive Environments

– *American Journal of Health Promotion* Fall, 1986

Strategies to Create Supportive Workplace Environments to Combat Obesity

- **Behaviors Targeted:**
 - Physical Activity
 - Eating
- **General Strategies**
 - Physical Environment
 - Policy
 - Cultural Norms
 - Group Processes

Interventions to Create
Supportive Environments to
Combat Obesity

Enhancing Physical Activity

Physical Environment

● Transport Related

- Work location adjacent to public transportation and in walk-able neighborhoods
- Parking lot location that requires people to walk from the car to the door
- Small parking lot size that encourages people to take public transportation or walk/bike/run to work
- Bike lockers to store bikes road to work
- Showers and lockers for people to freshen up after walking, biking, or running to work or during lunch

Enhancing Physical Activity

Physical Environment

- **Stairs Related**

- **Stairs that are centrally located, well lit, attractive, allow women wearing dresses to be modest, with prompts to encourage use**
- **Elevators that are efficient but smaller, less inviting, slower, less conveniently located**

- **Architecture Related**

- **Floor plans that stimulate moving around and mingling**
- **Manufacturing, administrative floor plans and structures that require MORE exertion or activity.....a challenge if they decrease efficiency or increase safety hazards.**

Enhancing Physical Activity

Physical Environment

- **Fitness Facility Related**

- Rooms available for aerobic classes and other types of exercise
- Campus with walking trails, Parcourse, etc.
- Onsite fitness facility
- Bulk discount memberships and subsidies at local fitness centers

Enhancing Physical Activity

Policy

- Encourage stretching/walking during breaks
- Conduct walking and standing meetings
- Subsidize public transportation
- Do not subsidize parking costs
- Flexible schedule to allow working out before, after, or during work

Enhancing Nutritious Eating

Physical Environment

- Healthy food in cafeteria and vending machines
- Refrigerators to store meals brought from home
- Water fountains instead of soda fountains or coffee machines
- Serving healthy foods in department meetings, social functions, etc
- Point-of-purchase incentives and education
- Labeling healthier food selections

Enhancing Nutritious Eating

Policy

- **Discount pricing for healthy foods in cafeteria**
- **Bulk purchase discounts agreements with local restaurants and stores**
- **Serving free healthy food eg. Natural Ovens Bakery, Manitowoc, Wisc (reference)**

Enhancing Overall Health

Organization Norms

- **Creating new support networks: healthy food cooking clubs, activity clubs/sports leagues**
- **Integrating concepts into existing networks: department meetings, employee clubs**
- **Measuring and reporting targeted factors, eg program participation rates, norms and values related to activity and nutrition**
- **Integrating fitness and activity features in internal publications**
- **Public recognition of people making progress at each stage of change**
- **Visible participation by top management**
- **Grooming of program “Champions”**
- **Normative Systems Approach to Culture Change**

Enhancing Overall Health

Policy

- **Wellness days instead of absence days**
- **Funding awareness and behavior change/skill building programs**
- **Incentive Programs**
- **Small prizes to participate and achieve goals**
- **Group and individual competitions with prizes**
- **Including program fees in cafeteria benefits offerings**
- **Waiving health insurance premium co-payments for participants (J&J)**
- **Gain sharing of medical cost savings or productivity gains**

Empirical Support

- “A Site-Specific Literature Review of Policy and Environmental Interventions that Promote Physical Activity and Nutrition for Cardiovascular Health: What Works?”
- Matson Koffman, Brownstein, Neiner, Greaney, (in press) *Am Journ Health Promo.*
- Comprehensive systematic review empirical studies on environmental and policy interventions, published 1970-October, 2003, intervention described, physiological, psychological, organizational outcomes
- 65 studies published before 1990
- 64 published 1990-2003

Findings

- **Strong Evidence: Improving eating**
 - Point of purchase strategies
 - Menu modifications, price reductions
 - Offering/labeling healthier foods
- **Strong Evidence: Physical Activity**
 - Signs increase stair use
- **Moderately Good evidence**
 - Providing more access to places and opportunities for physical activity increases physical activity
- **Preliminary Evidence**
 - Comprehensive workplace programs with counseling, education, peer support, fitness facility access increase physical activity levels

Literature gaps

- Fewer studies on physical activity than nutrition
- Lack of studies in health care settings
- Strategies not tested against each other to non-environmental approaches
- Interventions not described in detail
- Many design and measurement limitations
- Most studies of short duration
- Lack of studies for underserved populations

