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?”


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