Assessing the Health Infrastructure of Mississippi’s Community Colleges

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Assess the current state of worksite health promotion programming

Assess associated resource capacity in community colleges in Mississippi
Why the worksite?

• Community Colleges identified as the worksite in our study

• Full-time employees spend 1/3 of most days working, making worksites an opportune setting to implement health promotions (Olson, 2015)

• Proper programming and appropriate resources has shown to improve workers all around well-being (CDC, 2017)

• Companies that invest in worksite wellness programs can avoid surplus expenses associated with treating chronic diseases and demonstrate a valuable return on investment (ROI) (Wein, 2015; Baicker et al., 2010)
Why a community college setting?

• Spread out among vast number of communities
• May be one of few resources in heavy rural communities
• Good employee health could drive healthier outcomes in surrounding communities as well as provide role model of healthy behavior towards students
• Mississippi community colleges employ more than 8,100 people statewide, and typically fall among the top 5 employers in their respective regions (National Strategic Planning & Analysis Research Center, 2020)
• More than 75% of community college graduates (who are non-university-bound) enter employment in the Mississippi labor force within a year of graduating (NSPARC, 2020)
Economic Impact of Community Colleges

Mississippi community colleges directly and indirectly generate more than:

- $2.1 billion in wages and salaries
- $3.9 billion in state GDP
- $277 million in state and local tax revenue, through their operations and the students they serve
Methods

• 51-item survey, cover letter, and consent form emailed and physically mailed to all 15 Mississippi community college presidents office address and email address

• **The survey addressed**: employee demographic information, worksite wellness programs, management support for health promotion programs, and campus support for worksite wellness programs

• Institution Presidents were asked to complete the form or delegate to an appropriate campus official

• Two follow-up emails were sent out to help assure higher response rates
Results

- 8 out of 15 community colleges responded to the survey
- Almost 90% reported having a wellness program for faculty and staff
- All responding colleges indicated the presence of cafeterias, and fitness facilities on campus
- Facilities were generally available to both campus and community members
- All reported having sidewalks sufficient to enable safe outdoor health related fitness activities
• 75% of the responding colleges had some form of health/wellness committee in place

• Community Colleges were asked about 16 health topics on if any workshops/class/event was given in past 12 months:
  • All topics were covered by at least one community college
  • Nutrition and physical activity were most frequently covered
  • Sleep/fatigue and musculoskeletal disorders were least frequently covered
Limitations

• Cross-sectional design
• Low response rate
• Solely Quantitative data collection
Implications on Health and Economy

• Potential to enhance health, reduce disparities and improve quality of life

• Healthier workforce can reduce state incurred health care costs

• Can result in increased monetary gains for community colleges

• Resources on campuses may be sole resource in some rural communities and presents opportunity of linkage of these resources between college/community

• Opportunities for advocacy efforts to increase funding for community colleges
Conclusions

• Most state community colleges across Mississippi conduct basic health programming structured in place for their employees

• To our knowledge, one of few studies that aimed to identify worksite wellness programming in Mississippi community colleges

• Further research can expand on recognized health/wellness committees and conduct more in-depth findings (i.e. interviews)

• Further research can identify health resources in the surrounding communities, and suggest implications for future linkage of community college/local community resources to benefit community as a whole