

Chapter 2: Planning Successful Cancer Education Programs for School Employees



In Chapter 1 you learned about the barriers to getting mammograms and Pap tests that all women face, as well as the unique occupational barriers experienced by school employees. Now that you know the importance of spreading the early detection message, how do you start planning an education program for your school community? This chapter addresses not only the benefits to your school and its educational employees, but also which key resources you should include from your community.

Chapter 4 provides sample activities, ranging from 10 minutes to 2 hours, that have been implemented by teachers like you. The following information is important for you to review before planning a program. The amount of material you use depends on the length of program you design. Keep in mind, however, that the fundamental elements that should *always* be included in your program are: (1) basic cancer information, (2) the importance of early detection, and (3) local cancer resources.

Gaining Support of Administrators

Nationally, health promotion programs offered at the worksite, or sponsored by employers for their employees, have been shown to reduce risks for targeted diseases and health conditions, and improve employee productivity morale. Therefore the benefits of such programs outweigh the initial investment put into implementing them. **Table 2** identifies the six reasons for worksite wellness as outlined by the Wellness Councils of America.

Despite the benefits, many school employees say administrators are not supportive of such education programs. **Table 3** includes common misconceptions about worksite health



promotion programs that keep many administrators from supporting them.

Administrators need to know that supporting your cancer education activities will have far reaching benefits for the school system and will outweigh any initial costs.

By supporting health education programs, the school system demonstrates its concern for the health of employees, establishes itself as a community leader in key health issues, links schools and employees with community resources and services, and protects its investment in employee training and development.

Administrator support can open the door to expanded promotional

and planning opportunities, such as access to photocopy services and meeting rooms, etc.

Without administrator support, it will be harder to sell this program to other leaders in the school system and could affect your ability to reach women in your school community. If your key school administrators do not yet know about your program ideas, take the time to acquaint them with your efforts and officially invite their support or participation.

Before contacting your administrators:

1. Read the basic cancer information in **Appendix 1** to be familiar with the issues.



CHAPTER 2

Documenting and Evaluating Project REACH

2. Read the overview of Project REACH again to make sure you can explain what this program is and who it is intended to reach.
3. Identify the ways that involvement will benefit the district/school and employees.

Involving Community Resources and Experts

In addition to recruiting a team to help you plan a program, enlisting the support of community resources and experts allows your audience to receive the most up-to-date cancer information and statistics and gives

you the opportunity to distribute the workload more evenly. Partnering with community resources is important to:

- Increase your knowledge of and access to services or resources that will directly benefit the women who come to your program (such

Table 2: Six Reasons for Worksite Wellness

Reason # 1: Health Care Costs

Health care costs continue to be an issue of major concern. Sadly, it is estimated that as many as 41 million Americans are without health care insurance. However, because much of the health care costs are linked to health habits, it is possible for employers to take aggressive action toward reducing health care utilization and containing costs by taking on a health promotion program.

Reason # 2: Most Illnesses Can Be Avoided

The leading causes of illness are largely preventable. Believe it or not, experts suggest preventable illnesses make up approximately 70% of the entire burden of illness and associated costs in the United States. Behind these illnesses are a whole host of preventable factors including such things as tobacco use, high-risk alcohol consumption, sedentary lifestyles, and poor nutritional habits. If you can reduce the burden of illness among your workforce by preventing the major causes of sickness, more of your employees will remain healthy and productive.

Reason # 3: The Work Week is Expanding

The third reason why the concept of health promotion is important to businesses is the reality that the work week is expanding. Without question, an ever-growing work week poses a number of threats to the health and well-being of employees. However, as a number of progressive employers have demonstrated, health promotion programs can help to alleviate some of these concerns.

Reason # 4: The Technology Revolution is On

We are currently knee-deep in a revolution of technology. Our increased reliance on technology has ushered in new health concerns including things like repetitive stress injuries, low back problems, and compromised vision. Left unaddressed, these issues can have a serious impact in terms of the health of employees and the company checkbook.

Reason # 5: Employees' Stress Levels are Increasing

Not only are we living in a high tech era, we are also living in the midst of an information explosion. Inherent in the whole process is an increased level of stress. In fact, in a recent nationwide poll, 78% of Americans describe their jobs as stressful. Moreover, the vast majority indicated that their stress levels have worsened over the past ten years. By implementing a comprehensive stress management intervention, it is possible for leaders of businesses to successfully combat prevalent stressors in the workplace.

Reason # 6: Increasing Diversity in the Workforce

Perhaps one of the most exciting developments in the business environment is the increasing diversity of the workforce. However, with increasing diversity comes the need to address a variety of health and wellness issues in order to keep one's employees healthy and productive. Because health promotion programs help to pinpoint the specific health issues of most concern, such initiatives can be used to seamlessly identify and address a variety of diverse health issues.

Source: The Wellness Councils of America, www.welcoa.org



as mammogram and Pap test providers, transportation services).

- Decrease the expense of program planning by utilizing existing services and resources in the community.

Table 4 includes a sample of key cancer resources that will help you identify people with specialized knowledge about your community and the women you are trying to reach.

Without representation from key community organizations, local programs will lack the most crucial element — linking women in your community with resources and services appropriate for their needs. The number and level of local resources will depend on the size of your program.

Involving Cancer Survivors

Many people read and hear cancer statistics but continue to think, “It will never happen to me.” Involving cancer survivors in local education programs gives a face to cancer survivorship. Their involvement is a live testimony that many people survive cancer, especially those who are screened regularly.

If you choose to invite a cancer survivor to get involved in your efforts, be prepared to share the same information with them as with community resource representatives regarding your intended audience and the role you want them to play.

Whether you are inviting administrators to write a letter of support, community resources to exhibit, or cancer survivors to speak,

Table 3: Common Misconceptions About Worksite Health Promotion

Employees Won’t Participate

This is a legitimate concern. However, closer study of programs with low participation rates generally find poorly designed interventions. The reality is that when employers spend time listening to the needs of their employees, giving thoughtful consideration to program design, and making a steadfast commitment to removing organizational barriers, people take part.

It Won’t Work

Numerous studies have been conducted over the course of the past several years and the findings suggest that carefully-designed and properly executed interventions can and do work.

It Will Cost Too Much

There will be some type of cost involved. However, the costs associated with addressing the consequences of employees’ poor health habits will be far greater than any investment you’ll ever make in the health promotion program. In fact, for the majority of employers who adopt health promotion initiatives, the costs are quite reasonable.

Source: Wellness Councils of America, www.welcoa.org

Table 4: Key Cancer Organizations

Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Programs (BCCCPs) Every state is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to provide free or low-cost mammograms and Pap tests to eligible women. Local or state BCCCPs can be located by contacting your state or local health department.

American Cancer Society (ACS) ACS has local chapters, called units, in almost every community across the country. ACS units can provide information on cancer, speakers, referrals, and community services and programs.

Other Cancer Education and Service Organizations Other local organizations, such as the National Breast Cancer Coalition and the Susan Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, can also be helpful in your planning efforts by providing materials, speakers, and access to local services.

Contact Information included in **Appendix 1**.



Table 5: Sample Information to Include in Invitations

Intended Audience

We expect approximately 50 education support professionals at this program. We are particularly targeting African American women who serve in support roles in the school.

Why these Issues are Important

School employees face unique occupational barriers to getting regular cancer screening tests. Support professionals, in particular, are not in the same information loops as teachers and often have lower salaries. Many support professionals work part-time in our school and have no health insurance making them eligible for free or low-cost screenings offered by the health department.

What role you want them to play

- For Speakers:* We would like someone from your organization to speak for 15 minutes. We hope you can help us identify someone who can address...
- For Exhibitors:* We would like your organization to exhibit at our program. A six foot table will be available starting at...
- For requesting materials:* We would like to receive the following materials from your organization to distribute to our participants... We would like a letter of support...

What information should be included in their presentation/materials:

1. Basic breast and cervical cancer statistics and risk factors for our community and our specific audience,
2. Early detection information, including why it is important and the screening guidelines recommended by the American Cancer Society, and
3. Resources your organization has to offer, such as screening tests, transportation, child care, etc.

Location, Date, Times, and Deadlines:

Please submit your materials by April 1, 2003

you should be prepared to provide some basic information to them.

Table 5 outlines important information that should be provided to anyone invited to participate in your efforts. In addition, **Appendix 2** contains sample letters and handouts that can be used throughout the program planning process.

Don't Reinvent the Wheel

Regardless of what you hope to accomplish in your school community, remember that you don't always have to start from scratch. Planning an event to coincide with major theme events such as Breast Cancer Awareness Month (October), Cervical Cancer Awareness Month (January) or Race for the Cure can be beneficial to your efforts because:

- National organizations sponsoring such events may have promotional materials and planning kits available for free and reduced costs.
- Local news and media are more likely to cover your program if connected to a national organization or theme.
- People are more likely to participate in a program that is related to a national, well-recognized effort.

Appendix 1 includes a list of national theme events. Also consult with school and community calendars, as well as religious and federal holidays to ensure that your program is not competing with other important events.



Reaching Your Audience

If you are planning some type of event, think about what will inspire people to attend — a great speaker? A great door prize?

If incentives will draw a bigger audience, consider some of the following:

- Encourage local merchants to donate free merchandise or gifts as door prizes or in gift bags for participants,
- Ask local clinicians/clinics to offer discounts on early detection screening and follow-up services for participants,
- Offer beverages and snacks or a light meal donated by grocery stores and restaurants, or
- Purchase or borrow a breast model to teach breast self-examination.

Because no program is successful without participants, attracting them to your event is imperative. A number of effective communication channels are unique to school employees including: posters and flyers, paycheck envelopes, employee mailboxes, and bulletin boards, to name a few. However, it is important to decide which means of communication will reach the greatest number of people. Be sure to use more than one channel to ensure that all types of educational employees are included in your outreach efforts.

Identifying Funding Sources

There will always be some costs associated with any activity, even if it is a small photocopy expense. Whatever your expenses are, try to estimate them before you begin your program. Potential funders will want to know approximately how much money you intend to spend and how their money will be spent.

Some variations and changes to the budget you outline will occur, but identifying your financial needs in advance will help you avoid problems later. Once you have estimated your costs, start exploring funding opportunities early so you will not be delayed by lack of financial support. Ask your Association, school or other organizations for financial or In-Kind contributions. “In-Kind” refers to any donated product or service and are often easier to get than monetary contributions. Examples of contributed In-Kind items and services are:

- Refreshments for committee meetings,
- Reproduction of informational and promotional hand-out materials,
- Postage for meeting and event notices,
- Film and processing to document/promote your activities, and
- Fees for speakers.

NEA HIN also awards small grants through the Vivian Roy Bowser Cancer Education Fund. For more information on the application process refer to **Appendix 2**.

Ready, Set, GO! Developing a Workplan

A workplan is a step by step outline of the major tasks you must accomplish to implement your local cancer education program. All elements of your planning should be recorded in a workplan. This will serve as your “blueprint” to planning by outlining tasks and assigning responsibility for each one. A workplan will also provide a record of where you began and your progress throughout the planning process.

Table 6 shows a sample workplan that will guide you through the planning process. A blank copy is included at the end of this section for your use.



CHAPTER 2

Documenting and Evaluating
Project REACH

Table 6: Sample Workplan/Timeline

Our Local Program Title: Low-Cost Mammograms in Shipfield			
Date: 4/15/03	Time: 3:30pm	Place: Shipfield Junior High School Library	
Characteristics of Audience: Education Support Professionals, particularly African American Women		Expected Attendance: Workshop offered after Black Caucus annual meeting. Approximately 50 women expected.	
Tasks:	Team Member In Charge:	To Be Completed By:	Notes:
Design Promotional Poster and post-card	Mary	3/1/03	Mary's son is a graphic design student and offered to design the poster
Ask Principal to donate postage	Jeanie	3/10/03	Principal out of town 3/20
Invite NewYou Pharmaceuticals to donate \$500 for printing	Jeanie	3/1/03	NewYou donated \$500 to ACS for a breast self-exam program.
Print posters and post-cards	Mary	4/1/03	
Reserve Library	Keith	3/10/03	
Order refreshments	Keith	4/1/03	
Get nametags, pens, pencils	Keith	4/1/03	The main office donated materials
Check room for best set-up	Keith	4/1/03	
Invite ACS speaker	Jeanie	3/15/03	
Print promotional posters	Mary	3/15/03	
Hang posters in women's restrooms	Mary		
Send out post-card announcements to ESP in Shipfield Junior High	Mary	4/1/03	
Send post-card to Black Caucus members	Mary	4/1/03	
Get handouts, shower cards from ACS	Keith		
Assemble packets of materials and give-aways for attendees	Keith		

