

Healthy Workers – Healthy Futures

Case Study: Government Services Group

A state government department is committed to improving staff health and wellbeing through their Healthy Body, Healthy Mind framework. This aligns with the organisation's vision of healthy, energetic staff who feel supported and valued.

The Approach

Government Services Group (GSG) delivers valued services to citizens, the community and government in South Australia, through Service SA, eGovernment and Shared Services SA. Following recent amalgamations there are now over 1300 staff working in 22 locations across the state.

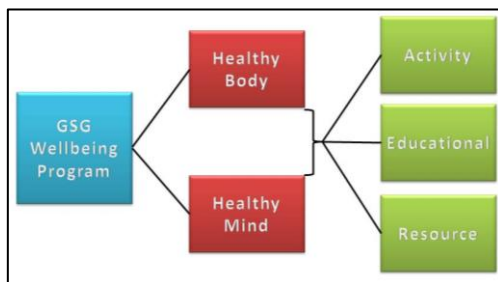
The objective is to develop and implement a wellbeing program for Government Services Group (GSG) that will maintain and improve the lifestyle, emotional resilience, fitness, health, safety and wellbeing of workers.

This includes:

- To promote a positive and equitable workplace environment where mental health and wellbeing is supported
- To promote and encourage participation in workplace health and wellbeing initiatives within and outside the workplace
- To educate employees about issues relating to health and wellbeing.

Under the direction of a Wellbeing Committee and with assistance from the Organisational Development Team, an overarching Healthy Body, Healthy Mind framework has been developed along with a series of activities and educational materials and resources to improve health and wellbeing for all staff.

GSG Wellbeing Framework



Informed by the health needs and interests of staff, evidence about risks to health, and the needs of the organisation, the following programs have been provided:

Healthy Body

- Ten Grand Steps – a walking challenge with

278 or 30% of Shared Services staff participating using a pedometer

- Corporate Cup – this is Adelaide's largest Be Active event and involves individuals and teams running around a set course fortnightly over 16 weeks to improve their fitness and wellbeing. The Wellbeing Program offered to contribute 75% towards the registration fee of any employee or team wishing to take part
- Nutrition workshops – Diabetes SA conducted workshops on reading food labels and eating a healthy diet which were well attended and will be run again
- The provision of fruit bowls (charged at 70c per piece), improvements to vending machines and the provision of healthy food at key workshops
- Flu Vaccinations – 389 employees were vaccinated in metropolitan and regional areas
- Health Checks – the Royal Adelaide Hospital Wellness Centre conducted health checks for 86 employees with suggestions for lifestyle modification
- Massages and pilates/yoga classes
- An increased supply of secure bike parks (supported by a cycling Executive Director!) and promotion of bike safety programs.

The program has also aligned with the initiatives recommended by SA Health, Healthy Workers – Healthy Futures initiative with a focus on the SNAP risk factors (smoking, nutrition, alcohol and physical activity).

Healthy Mind

Positive mental health and its relationship to work performance, team building, productive relationships and positive thinking is also a key focus area. A number of programs have been conducted and very well received with more planned, including:

- 'Stress Less' – to date 10 workshops developed by the Organisational Development Team have been conducted with a total of 139 participants. This workshops aims to provide individuals with a new perspective on stress, understanding the causes and cycles of stress and providing practical strategies and techniques on how individuals can manage



their stressors effectively on an everyday basis

- 'A Day in the Zone' – this workshop focused on teaching techniques to help employees live in the moment, positive thinking, meditation and mindfulness. Over 40 employees participated
- 'Live Life Forward' - 36 participants participated in this wellbeing workshop which looked at the psychology of happiness and 10 ways to increase personal wellbeing
- Lunch time meditation sessions
- Meditation recordings.

The Rationale

The GSG wellbeing program was designed to support GSG in achieving a healthy and energetic workforce within a supportive workplace culture and is aligned to and supports our organisational value 'Show we Care'. The aim is to have a workforce that feels motivated, safe and valued.

The program's initiatives were based on results and suggestions from the wellbeing surveys conducted in October 2012 for Shared Services SA and May 2013 for Service SA and eGovernment. In addition to this voluntary health checks were conducted in June 2013 by the Royal Adelaide Hospital and the results were incorporated into the program on July 2013.

GSG has a supportive learning culture where employees are entitled to four hours per month for learning and development and the health and wellbeing activities are included as options in this learning and development objective. This represents an acknowledgment by management that learning to be healthy is an important skill for staff in order to achieve business success. Other supports include employee assistance programs, flexible and family friendly work conditions, leadership programs and study leave.

The Process

The original Wellbeing Program was scoped and launched as the Shared Services SA Wellbeing Program in January 2013. In March 2014, Service SA and eGovernment joined the department (which sits within the Department of Premier and Cabinet) and the wellbeing program was expanded to form the Government Services Group Wellbeing Program.

The Wellbeing Committee was established with a mix of managerial and other staff. The Committee submitted a proposal to management for approval of the Healthy Body Healthy Mind program and budget.

The functions of the committee are to:

- Develop, guide and coordinate the program
- Identify workers interests and needs
- Motivate and encourage workers to participate
- Maintain management's commitment and enthusiasm
- Discuss potential program elements and decide what activities to include.

The GSG Wellbeing Program has been designed around programs that have no or very little cost associated with them, potentially delivering savings to Government.

A staff survey was conducted with a good response rate of 52%. The results showed that 47.5% of respondents were baby boomers making them at higher risk of chronic disease¹. Smoking rates at 11% were lower than the state average but showed room for improvement and at least 50% of staff were not sufficiently active.

Other findings included that 50% of respondents had lower than the recommended intake of fruit and 88% had lower than the recommended intake of vegetables. Other areas include 33% of respondents having problems getting to sleep. These results informed program directions.

Positives and Achievements

The high level support and advice from the Wellbeing Committee combined with the team approach in the Organisational Development team works well.

Participation numbers across the numerous events have been high. Evaluations conducted on the Stress Less workshops show that 97.5% of participants rated them as valuable to highly valuable.

Ten Grand Steps was also very successful with approximately 30% of the workforce participating

Overcoming the Challenges

Reaching staff in all regional locations can be challenging - they face time and logistical barriers to attending workshops and participating in group programs. The Wellbeing Committee will be launching Wellbeing Initiative Payments which will allow regional offices to select and organise appropriate activities.

As for many organisations it can be challenging reaching those staff that have the highest health needs and maintaining commitment of staff in activities is difficult. For example a number of people failed to attend organised health checks. The team is responding by 'thinking outside the square' and looking for new and fresh ideas to engage staff.

Whilst there are short term evaluations conducted for many of the events, evaluating the longer term effects can be problematic. There are many factors impacting on issues such as sick leave and retention so it is difficult to link the program with such measures. Measuring implementation over multiple sites is also problematic but this is an area for future attention.

Government Shared Services Wellbeing Program Badge



The Future

This online survey is due to be repeated in 2014 and will provide further information to inform program directions.

A weight loss initiative including health checks and access to the Get Healthy Line, is under consideration for 2014. Other areas of focus include fitness challenges, sleep seminars, alcohol education and mental health.

Duration and resources

The program has a budget of \$10K annually and is supported by an officer working part time on this initiative.

Government Shared Services Yoga session



¹ Wittert G. Australia's baby boomer generation: Implications of obesity and related chronic disease on economic productivity. September 2012. Available at: http://www.adelaide.edu.au/apmrc/research/projects/Baby_Boomer_Presentation_Wittert.pdf

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