

# Case Study: Country Home Services

Initiated by “grassroots” employees and supported by both Management and their Board, CHS has developed a “Wellness Program” to accommodate the individual cultures within each office. The program encourages employees to engage with each other and within the organisation. The program is entering its second year.

Country Home Services (CHS) is committed to improving the health and wellbeing of their 32 staff, located in three geographically distinct offices and operating across 26,000 square kilometers (Barossa Valley, Clare Valley, Wakefield Plains, Gawler, Southern and Northern Yorke).

### The Approach

The idea of a “Wellness Program” was first explored over a shared lunch between the Health & Safety Representatives (HSR) and Quality Risk and Safety (QRS) representatives from all three offices, who meet monthly in Balaklava.

CHS launched its “Wellness Program” in July 2013, with the aim of achieving the following:

- “To embed Wellbeing in CHS work practices
- To stimulate cultural change around Wellbeing within the CHS workgroup
- To empower the CHS workgroup to recognize Wellbeing practices both current programs and future strategies
- To identify the ‘un-used’ skills and talents of CHS employees utilizing them in Wellbeing programs
- To establish a Wellbeing buddy system utilizing Banksia Consulting Data
- To foster a safe working environment in CHS congruent with WHS Act
- To support CHS employees to achieve a healthy work life balance”.

### The Rationale

CHS provide assistance and support to people who may need help around their home. This may include services such as domestic jobs, gardening, cleaning, personal grooming, home maintenance and seasonal chores. CHS use locally based independent contractors to deliver

these services to all members of the community, irrespective of age or ability.

The need to develop a “Wellness Program” was identified out of concern for the Health and Wellbeing of staff who were facing radical changes within the organisation. HSR and QRS representatives recognised that further planned changes would potentially impact on staff and were concerned about the repercussions.

Members of the committee had noticed increased levels of stress among staff including themselves and worried about the effect these changes were having on the individual health and ability of staff to continue working effectively. Staff discussed wanting the organisation to focus on their wellbeing and for wellbeing strategies to be incorporated into their day to day work and play.

### Fit with organisational core values

CHS’s goal is to impact positively on the lives of older people and their carers through a range of community care services. As an accredited provider, CHS focus on assessing client needs and provision of locally based service delivery and is committed to creating a positive work environment. Work safety such as Quality, Risk and Safety requirements are a high priority and the program complements this focus.

### The Process

In 2013, the Country Home Advocacy Project (CHAP) workgroup proactively sought to improve their health by organising and participating in the ‘Inaugural CHAP Biggest Loser but Winner Competition’. The group recognised the opportunity as a way to motivate staff to get healthy by providing support and making the experience fun. The program proved to be very successful with a number of staff members



recording a weight loss of up to 7 kilos over the 8 week challenge.

In recognition of this success and the need for a Wellness Program, the committee put forward a proposal to the CEO, requesting the support of the Board and Executives to address the increasing levels of stress in the workplace and support the 'roll out' an extensive Wellness Program. The program would be collaboratively led by the QRS and HSR Reps across all CHAP sites.

The proposal outlined areas of concern identified during the competition, including:

- Levels of inactivity
- Food as medication
- Unhealthy food and alcohol choices
- Hydration in a dry climate
- Affirmations, creating a positive outlook and resilience.

The proposal highlighted the benefits of incorporating Health and Wellbeing in the workplace to both staff and the organisation, including staff retention, reduced absenteeism and improved credibility as an 'employer of choice'.

Upon gaining endorsement from the CEO and the Board, CHS formed a Health and Wellbeing Committee, consisting of members from the Quality, Risk and Safety Committee (QRS and HSR Reps). The Heart Foundation's 10 Steps to a Healthy Workplace was used as a guide to implement the program

A Terms of Reference document and an Action Plan were developed and assistance from the Healthy Workers Adviser from Aged and Community Services SA & NT was sought.

## Positives and Achievements

Improving the health and wellbeing of CHS staff over the last year has been supported through

the following strategies:

- Formalising a Wellness Culture: including Feel Good Friday an inspirational email circular: incorporating Wellness in weekly staff meetings; dedicated Air Time that teams can take away from their computer, 'Pay it Forward' opportunities and healthy eating options
- The inaugural Managing Stress and Mindfulness Wellness Days held in Balaklava and Angaston
- Celebrating Fruit'n'Veg month with the theme "vamp up your Veg and Flirt with your fruit"
- Commencing the CHS Smoke Free Environment goal. Wellness Buddies have attended various workshops and connected with Aged Care organisations across the state to begin a 'smoke free journey'.
- Myer Briggs Training/ Peer mentoring

## Overcoming the challenges

The Wellness days have assisted in deconstructing geographical silo's from site to site, however co-ordination is quite challenging for the workgroup, who have to travel to workplaces, spread over three regions. However, wellness events and activities are seen as a great way for staff to keep in contact with each other by breaking down communication barriers that isolate workers from one another.

## The Future

Based on staff interest and need, CHS aim to make their Wellness program sustainable by:

- Embedding the program in existing organisational processes such as WHS.
- Keeping the Wellness conversation and activity alive by maintaining Wellness as an agenda item at weekly team meetings and
- Maintaining Wellness strategies that have helped CHS to manage the impact of organisational changes to their staff.

Future planned activities include:

- Smoke Free Policy
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Health and Wellbeing Day
- Healthy Weight Competition.

Find out more about how you can create a healthy workplace and find a Healthy Worker Adviser for your sector:

Healthy Workers Healthy Futures Initiative: [www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/healthyworkers](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/healthyworkers)  
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