

Working *on* Wellness

Supporting healthier people, workplaces and communities.

A HealthyMass Initiative

Case Study

Organization: Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission

Location: South Boston, MA

Employees: 200

Business Type: Government Agency

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC), which promotes employment and independent living in the community for people with disabilities, eagerly participated in the Department of Public Health's Working on Wellness program despite looming budget cuts and lay offs. With the strong support of its Commissioner Charles Carr, the MRC dove right in and established a diverse Wellness Committee and appointed co-chairs to lead the effort.

In a survey, employees expressed interest in increasing physical activity, improving eating habits, and reducing stress levels. Using these results, the Wellness Committee created a plan to educate employees on healthy choices and provide opportunities for healthy living.

To help educate the MRC workforce on healthy eating and active living:

- » Employees attended monthly "lunch and learn" presentations from registered dietitians, certified trainers, and other

health professionals.

- » Lectures were followed up with monthly newsletters to reinforce the lessons.

To create opportunities for employees to be more active, the Committee:

- » Identified nearby walking and wheel chair accessible routes for a "Walk and Wheel" club.
- » Used grant funds to hire a personal trainer, Reiki practitioner and yoga instructor.
- » Designated an office as a 'quiet space' for meditation and relaxation; employees painted it, added a sofa, and stocked it with books, a yoga mat, and music.

To create a supportive environment for healthy food choices, the MRC:

- » Sells fruit for only 50 cents



every other week.

- » Adopted the DPH Healthy Meeting Guidelines for all meetings where food is provided.
- » Worked with the vending machine supplier to offer healthier choices.

There have been many unanticipated outcomes as a result of the MRC's efforts. The building owner added a free gym in the building with wheel chair- and scooter-accessible equipment. In addition, a WeightWatchers® at Work program and a "Biggest Winner" contest resulted in a total weight loss of 75 pounds, and an average 3.5% decrease in body fat.

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