

SHIP stories

The Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) works to improve health through better nutrition, increased physical activity and decreased commercial tobacco use and exposure.

Across the state, work places are one key area in which SHIP works to improve health. As of June 2011:

- SHIP has assisted with over 870 worksite wellness initiatives. These efforts reached over 138,000 employees across the state and set the stage to reduce obesity and tobacco use, improve productivity and help contain health care costs.



Trimming Costs and Waistlines at Watonwan County

Watonwan County office had a big problem.

With a 33 percent increase in health costs, the Watonwan County office needed to trim its costs. “The county knew it needed to get employees moving more and eating healthier,” commented Chera Sevcik, Supervisor Statewide Health Improvement Program. “They applied for SHIP funding and found something that was cost efficient and effective for employee wellness.”

In the first two years of SHIP, Wantonwan County government’s goals were to cut healthcare costs by improving nutrition and physical activity and reducing tobacco. What was Wantonwan’s plan of attack? They created health policies to 1) establish a low cost healthy foods vending program directed by employees; 2) motivate employee physical activity through a mileage rewards program. Every 25 miles walked during the workday (could be done at break times or lunch) earned an hour and half vacation; and 3) develop a first-ever tobacco policy that prohibited tobacco within 25 feet of the county building.

The result?

The vending program served healthier options and kept individual items priced below 30 cents (compared to the cheapest vending machine item priced at \$1.25). Originally funded by SHIP, the vending program is now completely self-sustaining. Complementary to increasing healthy foods access, the mileage rewards program significantly boosted physically activity at the county office. Besides helping employees maintain and develop fitness, the mileage program also helped employees reduce stress and connect with other employees. The tobacco policy has spurred more tobacco policy development to support smoke-free zones.

SHIP is working to make the healthy choice the easy choice in Minnesota. Find out how at www.health.state.mn.us/ship

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