



ANCHOR

ACCELERATING NATIONAL COMMUNITY HEALTH OUTCOMES THROUGH REINFORCING PARTNERSHIPS

WHAT WORKS IN WORKSITE WELLNESS - A WORKSITE WELLNESS FORUM



The American Heart Association's Accelerating National Community Health Outcomes through Reinforcing ([ANCHOR](#)) Partnerships Program is supporting healthy living in communities around the country. As part of the national project, the Maryland ANCHOR campaign is focused on increasing access to healthier foods and beverages at worksites in Anne Arundel, Howard, and Prince George's counties. By connecting with local organizations and coalitions that share a similar vision, the local ANCHOR campaign has learned about current efforts to improve healthy food access, identified key players in those movements, and developed partnerships to help create a greater impact in the community. One of the most successful partnerships resulted in the creation of a regional workplace wellness forum that attracted 125 people from more than 80 companies throughout central Maryland to share best practices, learn from industry experts, and receive guidance from the American Heart Association on their Healthy Workplace Food and Beverage Toolkit.

The Challenge

More than two-thirds of American adults are overweight or obese, putting them at risk for heart disease, stroke and many other chronic illnesses and conditions. Making health-conscious changes in the workplace, where many adults spend much of their day, can be crucial to helping people lead healthier lives. It also helps cultivate social norms that foster healthier choices and behaviors. A 2010 study showed that improving the types of foods and beverages offered in the workplace may positively affect employees' eating behaviors and result in net weight loss.



“This event created energy around the importance of worksite wellness, and participants left with a newfound commitment to creating a culture of wellness for their employees.”

- Danelle Buchman, ANCHOR Regional Campaign Manager

The Solution

The local ANCHOR program tapped its strongest partnerships to create a worksite wellness forum that connected local businesses with the American Heart Association and other organizations offering resources and technical assistance to help companies create healthier food environments at work. ANCHOR partnered with the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene’s “Healthiest Maryland Businesses” program and the Baltimore City Health Department to hold the “What Works in Worksite Wellness” forum on March 11, 2016.

The event connected local businesses from across the Baltimore region and provided opportunities to familiarize themselves with American Heart Association’s Healthy Workplace Food and Beverage toolkit. In addition, participants were able to network with local vendors and organizations that could support their worksite wellness initiatives. They also heard from area business leaders who have implemented innovative workplace health and wellness policies, learned how their programs got started and how they overcame barriers.

In her keynote address, Baltimore City’s Health Commissioner, Dr. Leana Wen, addressed the importance of worksite wellness from a public health perspective. She also discussed the impact of the city’s recent implementation of a healthy vending policy. Another speaker, Heather Gavras, a national consultant for the American Heart Association, presented on how businesses of any size can adopt healthy vending policies, using examples pulled from the Food and Beverage toolkit. Gavras also used that resource to explain other plans that can improve workplace food environments.

Sustaining Success

The “What Works in Worksite Wellness” forum gave the American Heart Association the opportunity to engage workplaces on the issue, and provide training, tools and resources from its Healthy Workplace Food and Beverage Toolkit with multiple businesses. The local ANCHOR program also shared workplace wellness resources and provided one-to-one technical help to companies applying for American Heart Association recognition as a “Fit-Friendly Worksite,” a designation bestowed upon employers who go above and beyond for the health of their employees. The local ANCHOR program will follow up with forum attendees to encourage them to sign a toolkit commitment letter, apply to be a Fit Friendly company, or do both.

Policy, System and Environmental Change

Providing the public with education tools is not enough to move the needle on the American Heart Association’s 2020 Impact Goal of preventing cardiovascular disease by 20% and increasing the health of the nation by 20%. Workplace leaders must be supported as they actively pursue cultural changes in their workplaces. By creating a culture of wellness through sustainable policy, systems and environmental changes, employees will have better access to healthier food and beverages and an easier time making nutritious choices at meal and snack times. The “What Works in Worksite Wellness” forum provided a kick-start for 80 companies trying to champion healthier changes in their workplaces.

Results

The “Worksite Wellness” forum drew 125 people, representing 80 companies. Participants received resources and were guided through key components of the Healthy Workplace Food and Beverage Toolkit. Maryland ANCHOR will follow-up with all forum participants to check in on their progress, offer additional assistance and to see how the American Heart Association’s resources are being utilized.

Get Involved

The American Heart Association encourages employers to create a healthy work environment and promote a healthy lifestyle for their employees. Visit www.heart.org/foodwhereur and download the Healthy Workplace Food and Beverage Toolkit for ideas on how to engage leadership and colleagues in creating an environment where a healthy lifestyle is supported at work.