

## **Rocky Mountain Conference on Aging Aging in the Workplace**

### **Worksite Wellness: A Positive Impact on Employers & Aging Employees**

Presenter: Elizabeth DeJongh, MS, Worksite Wellness Coordinator/Health Educator  
Presentation Date and Time: October 25, 2007 10:30 am

This presentation was a focus on the benefits of wellness in the workplace from both the employee and the employer's perspective. It would be anticipated the direction of this presentation would be to the employees and their better health, but in fact it was directed more to the employer and the financial and employee morale gain as it relates back to the employer. Elizabeth DeJongh works for the Weld County Health Department and has vast experience with Weld County employers. Ms. DeJongh provided many different levels and types of interventions an employer may be interested in implementing.

1. Weld County Health Department is currently participating in a program called Steps to a Healthier Colorado. This is funded by a 5 year (2003-2008) federal grant. This program is attempting to prevent chronic disease (diabetes, obesity, asthma) from occurring by offering health education in the community, schools, worksites and in health care businesses. Since Colorado's population's over the age of 65 is expected to increase by 247% by 2030, Weld County feels the need to be involved. Also quoted in the presentation was the fact that 70% to 90% of chronic disease is preventable, hence the desire to be involved in wellness education.
2. The anticipated savings to employers who implement a wellness program is approximately \$3-6 for every dollar invested. Granted many of the employers see the expense involved but it is more difficult to envision the savings. Summex Corporation (Health management services to employer, hospital systems, managed care organizations) reports the following based on overall results of 42 companies:
  - a. 28% reduction in sick leave
  - b. 26% reduction in health care costs
  - c. 30% reduction in Disability Management/Workers Compensation
  - d. Cost/Benefit Ratio: \$1:\$5.63
3. One of the tools recommended was a website providing the Wellness Councils of America (WELCOA) model. This model provides a blueprint for effective wellness programs in the workplace. The model involves seven parts:
  - a. Senior Level Support
  - b. Cohesive Wellness Team
  - c. Collect Data
  - d. Craft an Operating Plan
  - e. Choose Appropriate Interventions
  - f. Supportive Environment
  - g. Evaluate Outcomes

The overall emphasis of this presentation was to begin some sort of program in the workplace because even the simplest of programs will reap results.

Submitted by: Julie Weber, University of Northern Colorado, October 29, 2007