



SHARE

Supporting Health Advances
FOR RURAL EMPLOYEES

The goal of the SHARE project is to increase the capacity of rural employers in Mississippi, St. Francis, Phillips, and Chicot Counties in Arkansas to improve the overall health and well-being of their employees. By focusing on employees and worksites as a target audience, the SHARE project will reach a key sector of the population in the Delta and directly address chronic disease burdens driven by social and economic determinants. Residents of these counties experience many health disparities, including higher rates of “lifestyle” chronic diseases rooted in social determinants of health.

“ We had at least one employee that identified an urgent medical need as a result of the event. The benefits of this event will be far-reaching, both for the individuals that participated in this event, and those who will be motivated to proactively manage their health.”

PROJECT OUTCOMES



EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Q: To what extent did the intended outcome of increasing capacity of local employers to support employee health in targeted 17 employers occur over the course of the project?

A: A positive shift in the organizational capacity to support employees’ health. Employers demonstrated an increased awareness, understanding, responsibility, and concern for the health and well-being of their employees and for having a healthy workforce. Staff members who led the initiative felt equipped and empowered to help employees based on the information and resources they received. Similarly, the health center staff appreciated the program because it helped them reach out to the community more often.

Q: What evidence exists of employee health-seeking behaviors?

A: The SHARE program interventions had transformative effects on employees’ health, health seeking-behaviors, and care in case of serious health issues. For example, employees focused more on their health—proactively monitored their blood pressure, understood the results, and followed up with their doctors as needed. Employees also altered their eating habits. Some brought home-prepared lunches that included healthier eating choices, such as lean meat sandwiches, fruits, and salads. To improve physical health, employees exercised and walked more, and some dropped significant weight (up to 40 lbs). To improve mental health, employers and employees recognized the need for stress reduction techniques such as yoga, and meditation.

“ I hold monthly employee safety meetings that all are required to attend. This is a great opportunity for us to discuss a wider variety of health concerns and consider how we can make the workplace healthier as well as safer.”

Q: What unintended outcomes or other significant changes were experienced by employees because of the SHARE project?

A: Positive impact of the SHARE project was increased community focus on health. Access to the resources provided by the SHARE project, such as blood pressure monitoring machines at more public-facing businesses, such as libraries and grocery stores, increased awareness and use among employees and the community. The health materials provided by the SHARE project were shared with the beneficiaries (employees) and other community members and programs, such as the intensive outpatient program. In addition to physical screenings, mental health screenings significantly affected employees because they made employees learn the importance of psychological health—emotional reaction by one of the employees was indicative of self-reflection, and realization of self-care. Although health center staff were not the beneficiaries of the SHARE program and worked in a medical facility, they also reported that their coworkers started focusing more on their health. They realized that it is important for them to focus on their own health and wellness as they do for their patients.

Q: How relevant has SHARE’s objective, priority interventions, and approach been to the situation of the employees?

A: The SHARE program screening/wellness offered more services and thorough support to the employees in a comfortable setting than regular screenings at doctor’s offices. The program was viewed as a “one-stop shop” for health screenings and education where they were empowered and encouraged to ask questions. The health education materials and health screenings made employees learn more about their health—physical, mental, and emotional health. Employees and employers appreciated that health educators/staff were knowledgeable and supportive, and health education materials were frequently used and disseminated widely. This support was especially significant for those who did not have health insurance or access to healthcare.

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Q: To what extent has the SHARE project achieved its objectives as defined in the project’s results framework and reporting indicators?

A: With its goal of fostering TWH, the SHARE program has achieved its objectives of making both employers and employees aware of their health benefits and physical and mental health, including changes in workplace to make it a healthy environment. They noted the need to increase education about health insurance and advocacys. Employees initially had little information before the SHARE program, but during the course of the program, they could lead conversations about monitoring, measurement, and results. For example, they developed an understanding of the normal, borderline, and high blood pressure ranges and the role of nutrition on healthy cholesterol levels and cardiovascular health. Health center staff members were better equipped to provide services, including health screenings, health education, and patient navigation.

Q: What is the likelihood that the project benefits will endure over time after SHARE ends?

A: Employers, who were armed with the information and knowledge of best practices to support employee health, exhibited their commitment to continue to play a role in the future by focusing on employees’ health, providing opportunities to reduce stress and decompress, and arranging space/room to exercise. These employers view the SHARE program as a “catalyst”. Some employers have launched a wellness committee that organizes screenings and health events to create awareness and participation among their employees. Health centers intend to continue to conduct annual health screening events too, as they recognize the medical outreach in promoting health services and building trust with the community. The success of the program was also reflected in employees’ desires for ongoing annually, biannually, and even monthly screening events.



“ I ran into a coworker on campus the day of the Worksite Wellness Screening. He was already taking blood pressure medication, so he wasn’t planning to go. I convinced him to come, and his blood pressure was so high that he went immediately to the ER and was in the hospital for 2 weeks. He could have died if that screening wasn’t offered.”