

# Federal Occupational Health: Leading the Way in Health Promotion

Federal Occupational Health (FOH), a service unit within the Department Health and Human Services' Program Support Center, is leading the way in the health promotion industry, providing essential cutting edge programs, services and assistance to Federal agencies.

"FOH works in partnership with Federal organizations to go beyond designing and delivering health promotion programs but also to assure state-of-the-art, best-practice strategies," says Erica Wandtke, FOH associate operation manager and national health promotion coordinator for FOH's Civilian Health Promotion Services (CHPS). "FOH is a primary example of an agency that incorporates numerous services to provide comprehensive solutions to their federal customers."

The FOH mission is to improve the health and safety of the government workforce by designing and providing innovative, customized, cost-effective occupational, environmental health and work/life solutions. FOH is currently the largest provider of Clinical, Wellness/Fitness, Employee Assistance Program (EAP), Work/Life, and Environmental Health and Safety services to the Federal government. It is a component of the United States Public Health Service, the nation's foremost health agency, created by Congress in 1798.

In the area of fitness and wellness, FOH provides a comprehensive range of services designed to promote physical fitness and healthy lifestyles that can reduce stress, absenteeism, and health care costs, and in turn, enhance productivity. Services include: design, development, staffing, and management of onsite fitness centers; design and development of customized wellness and fitness programs; selection, purchase, and maintenance of fitness equipment; fitness assessments and pre-participation screenings; and wellness/fitness seminars on such topics as weight management, nutrition, and stress management. Now in the age of technology and smaller budgets, FOH is offering most of the services above virtually. One staff can cover thousands of clients using the Internet.

### Collaborative Efforts

Recently, FOH has been collaborating with the Air Force Materiel Command (AFMC) to offer Civilian Health Promotion Services (CHPS), which services a workforce of approximately 60,000.

"The Air Force Materiel Command sees their employees as their only 'appreciable' asset," says Teresa Young, FOH associate director of Logistics and Support Systems and account manager for CHPS Program. "They can't function successful-



Teresa Young,  
FOH associate director



Erica Wandtke,  
FOH associate  
operation manager

ly without a quality workforce. This led them to come to Federal Occupational Health for help designing an aggressive Population Health Management program. The program started more traditionally but it was soon determined that the most effective way to reach 60,000 employees located at nine sites across the country was to use a population health management approach."

Young points out that the authority for the AFMC and FOH to provide these types of services is pursuant to 5U.S.C. §7901 - Health Services Programs (PL 79-658) that authorizes the heads of agencies to establish health services programs, and 31 U.S.C. 1535 the Economy Act of 1932, as amended.

According to Wandtke, the CHPS program design utilizes the newer strategies of Population Health Management by incorporating strong communication systems, organizational integration, and targeted interventions. "The program model is driven by the application of a Health and Productivity Management based solution, which emphasizes the inter-relationship and collaboration of other wellness resources and support agencies on each base. The core elements of the program are aligned with the objectives of the AFMC Wellness Campaign."

She points out, "The Wellness Campaign's mission is to foster an environment among numerous disciplines to encourage the pursuit of personal holistic wellness for all AFMC personnel. This will enhance readiness and productivity of the workforce, and minimize personal risk of preventable injury, illness, or suicide. Personal holistic wellness includes four dimensions: physical, emotional, social and spiritual."

FOH and the AFMC have a strong dedication to the quantification of health improvements and participation measures. The program is based on the premise that:

- When performance is measured ... performance improves
- When performance is measured and reported ... the rate of performance improves
- When performance is measured, reported, and compared ... the rate of performance continues to improve
- When performance is measured, reported, and compared ... those who have improved performance the most will improve even more – as noted by General Bruce Carlson.

Young explains that the data is collected in many areas including "essential data" gathered from the annual Health Risk Appraisal. "Utilization, participation and specific out-

come data are measured and analyzed each month by the program providers as well as AFMC and FOH management. This management oversight is critical to a program's success."

The CHPS program is "leading FOH's charge in Population Health Management," adds Wandtke, "utilizing the infrastructure and experience of FOH's traditional programs while adding technology and social marketing to the mix. Applying newer prevention technologies is the key to meeting today's demands of Federal customers who seek a proactive and advanced model of health promotion programming. Central to the success of these new prevention technologies is a health management Web site where the ability to apply optimal program design transpires."

### Technology

FOH sought to find a technology solution that contained the presenteeism analysis needed and could allow for the specific required intervention-targeting approaches. The solution came via a health management Web site that was developed and customized by means of a health and wellness technology company, BSDI.

"Their V.11 Motivation web based software provides a complete system for communicating with and managing wellness for participants," Wandtke explains. "When individuals visit the site, they log into their personal home page after completing their online Health Risk Appraisal (HRA). This appraisal now includes a survey tool called the Health-related Productivity Loss Instrument, which allows for the collection of key presenteeism data for each health condition that the participant may have. Presenteeism is, in summary, lost productivity due to poor health conditions. The data is necessary to formulate priorities for programming associated with productivity loss in addition to estimating the monetary burden these health conditions create."

When establishing key health issues to address in health promotion programming, "presenteeism" is a very important consideration, especially for federal agencies.

"It is described as a health-related indirect cost or 'the hidden cost' of poor health which increases costs to an employer," says Wandtke. "Research has shown that presenteeism accounts for an estimated 60 percent of the total cost of poor health."

Total cost, she explains, would incorporate such things as medical and pharmacy cost, absenteeism and short and long-term disability. "These and other statistics undoubtedly create a new perspective on society's concerns related to health care cost and redirect them to focus on productivity loss. Although this financial burden is detached from insurance increases and other direct costs, it helps create a comprehensive picture of the overall burden associated with poor health conditions."

In addition, these measurements allow FOH and the AFMC to focus on improving federal employee's quality of life by addressing the issues that limit people from being productive on and off the job.

After completion of the HRA, participants reach their home page and have access to numerous features such as incentive programs, tracking logs and program information. Each participant's home page is also a destination with articles, feedback and a personalized wellness profile that is specific to their health needs as revealed through the health risk appraisal.

"If you have a health condition such as migraines you are likely to find articles visible on your home page for managing headaches," Wandtke points out. "This is the first step to the



The track at Moody AFB, Ga., provides ample opportunities to walk for health. U.S. AIR FORCE PHOTO/SENIOR AIRMAN S.I. FIELDER.

targeted approach. It continues with an administrative ability to communicate by e-mail to participants with tailored messages. For instance, the system will allow us to query individuals who do not know their blood pressure and send marketing information on an upcoming Blood Pressure Screening or educational information on the importance of regular blood pressure checks straight to them."

### Intervention ... Participation ... Results

A variety of intervention capabilities are created by FOH's Health Promotion experts "using the nearly endless possibilities available in the system," notes Wandtke. "Defining and targeting the highest priority conditions and/or poor health behaviors is essential. FOH uses the Health Risk Appraisal data reports and the query tools to capture and analyze the pertinent data. An HRA in this type of software infrastructure truly enables FOH to start the process of Population Health Management effectively and cost efficiently for their client agencies."

For FOH, program utilization is a key component in determining program achievements. "The higher the participation rate, the better the cost-to-benefit ratio," says Wandtke. "HRA participation alone can have a highly valuable outcome. It is the first step for individuals to evaluate their health and distinguish ways to lower their health risks."

Many individual success stories have come from this program. "Every month new stories of heart attacks prevented and weight loss are shared," notes Young. "Some are even featured on the respective Air Force Base newspapers. This will be the year that FOH and the AFMC can start to measure the real program impact as we collect the second year data."

She points out that although early successes are rewarding and notable, there is still a long way to go to "really touch all the employees of the AFMC, thus resulting in the level of return on investment that is achievable with this type of program."

FOH looks forward to building upon the success of the CHPS program as it works with other Federal agencies. "It is hard enough to sell health promotion during tight budget times in the government," Young says. "With enough measurable success coming from the FOH programs adopting the population management approach, FOH can expand to other agencies showing them that a dollar spent on prevention using population health management strategies and solutions, will be multiple dollars saved while creating a healthy productive workforce."