

**2007 Innovations Awards Program
APPLICATION**

ID # (assigned by CSG): 07-S-26OKHEALTHMENTORING

State: OKLAHOMA

Assign Program Category (applicant): Human Resources/Education/Workforce Development

- 1. Program Name:** OK Health Mentoring Program
- 2. Administering Agency:** Employees Benefits Council, State of Oklahoma. The Employees Benefits Council is the benefits office for the State of Oklahoma's 37,000 active state employees and their eligible dependents.
- 3. Contact Person (Name and Title):** Nancy A. Haller, Manager, State Wellness Program
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9. Please provide a two-sentence description of the program:

The OK Health mentoring program is a unique and effective solution for better health by incorporating wellness, disease management, and health mentoring into a single comprehensive wellness-mentoring program. Employees participating in the program receive wellness services through individualized, one-on-one health mentoring with a professional wellness coach.

10. How long has this program been operational (month and year)? Note: the program must be between 9 months and 5 years old on May 1, 2004 to be considered. The pilot program was implemented in July 2003 through December 2005 and was available to only 7,000 state employees. Full implementation began January 2006 and is available to 37,000 state employees.

11. Why was the program created? (What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address?) As the benefits office for State employees, the Employees Benefits Council works hard to balance benefit levels, cost, and choice. However, successfully managing group health benefits today involves more than plan design and cost management. It involves building a "culture of health" by providing a resource for State employees to successfully manage their health. Oklahoma has the second highest heart disease death rate in the nation. The State also has one of the highest smoking rates, sedentary lifestyle rate, as well as a growing obesity and diabetes epidemic. Studies clearly demonstrate that coronary heart disease can be prevented. The key to this is to identify and manage cardiovascular disease risk factors. The goal of the OK Health Mentoring program is to reduce employee's risk for heart attacks and strokes and thereby, reduce unnecessary medically related expenses.

By promoting healthy lifestyle choices and encouraging behaviors and attitudes among employees that are essential to good health, the OK Health program is working to decrease health care costs by lower health utilization costs and improve the lifestyles of employees in the State of Oklahoma. The OK Health Mentoring program is a well structured wellness/disease management program that contains all key elements designed to attract, engage, and motivate participants, and thereby produce a potential cost savings. The program is a scientifically based program designed to reduce cardiovascular disease and diabetes among Oklahoma state employees. It is evidence based that includes a risk identification computerized health risk assessment (HRA) to screen and risk stratify participants.

12. Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order. In January 2006, EBC implemented the OK Health Mentoring program as a resource for employees to address health risk factors, which contribute to preventable illnesses. The OK Health program is a unique and effective solution for better health by incorporating wellness, disease management, and health mentoring into a single comprehensive wellness-mentoring program. Participants receive services through a secured Internet web site and telephone one-on-one health mentoring. Participants receive personalized goals and actions plans with 12 week and one year follow up assessments. Professional health mentors counsel participants with health behavior change through weekly one-on-one mentoring adding educational modules, food diaries, and exercise diaries. Program participants and mentors interact with participant's physicians (PCP) in which the mentors forward information of the participant's goals and action plans and follow up progress reports. Participants are instructed to provide physician based clinical evaluations that include blood pressure, weight, hips and waist measurements, fasting lipid panel that provides information on total cholesterol, LDL, HDL, Triglycerides, and fasting blood glucose.

To encourage participation in the program, employees are eligible to receive two wellness incentives. The first incentive includes an initial visit to a primary care physician and lab work at no out-of-pocket cost to the participants. All health plans offered by the Employees Benefits Council have agreed to a "Wellness Partnership Contract " to waive these initial costs to encourage employees to participate in the program and to get healthy. The second wellness incentive is a discount at participating statewide fitness centers. A third possible incentive being offered by some agencies is the OK Health pay incentive. Agencies electing to offer a pay incentive are authorized to pay participants \$100 (Bronze), \$300 (Silver), or \$500 (Gold) for successfully completing the program. The incentive consists of three separate payments payable to a participant upon completion of the (1) initial enrollment, (2) twelve-week follow up, and (3) achieving goals at the twelve-month follow up. At this time fifty-two agencies are offering cash incentives. The challenge is to get all 124 state agencies participating in the cash incentives. There are many other ancillary benefits from having healthy employees such as less absenteeism and increased productivity.

The OK Health Mentoring program is part of Oklahoma Governor Brad Henry's State health initiative for a *Strong and Healthy Oklahoma*. The Governor announced bold reforms to help our State employees stay healthy and set examples for all Oklahomans. "You know as one of Oklahoma's largest employers, State government must lead the way," said the Governor. "And we must create an effective health program for State employees. I am very proud of the Employees Benefits Council that has lead the development of an initiative, an innovative,

successful initiative, a wellness program, a program that will offer every state employee the opportunity to learn how to take control of their health. The idea is to get people excited about health, to actually encourage healthy habits in state government, throughout the largest employment system in the State of Oklahoma. Think about the way we have approached things in the past. Most state agencies have smoking breaks—*smoking* breaks! Why not, *walking* breaks? I think walkers should have the same opportunities that smokers have. It's a simple, simple thing to implement.”

Each year, the Oklahoma Office of Personnel Management hosts *Quality Oklahoma Team Day* to recognize successful projects that instill excellence in all day-to-day state operations and activities throughout state government. During the May 2, 2006 *Quality Oklahoma Team Day* awards ceremony held at the State Capitol, the OK Health Mentoring program was awarded the prestigious *Team Day Specialty Award for Motivating the Masses*. The Specialty Award is presented to the project that involved a large amount of people, agencies, and partners.

13. Why is the program a new and creative approach or method? The OK Health program is new and creative because the entire program is 100 percent individualized for each participant: from risk stratification, setting wellness goals, and personalized one-on-one follow-ups. There are many programs that provide health and wellness resources, but few that provide a year long individualized one-on-one program. Program participants indicate the program is effective because of the individualized attention and accountability they receive by their personal mentor. During the two-year pilot program (July 2003 through December 2005) with Oklahoma's largest State agency, the Department of Human Services, employees were interested in weight loss, fitness and exercise, healthy eating, stress management, and smoking cessation. The results were tremendous. Seventeen percent of the agency's 7,000 employees participated. The national average for employee participation in wellness programs is approximately ten percent. Participants completing one year in the pilot program lost weight, lowered their blood pressure and cholesterol, and they saved money by lowering health claims costs by thirty-one percent. A thirty-one percent reduction in health claims costs was realized through individualized one-on-one mentoring between the participant and a professional health mentor for one year. The Employees Benefits Council was so impressed with the results that the OK Health program was offered to all 37,000 active state employees in January 2006.

14. What were the program's start-up costs? (Provide details about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other financial expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.) The OK Health pilot program start up budget was \$89,000. Specific purchases for the program was licensing and web portal fee through a contracted vendor INTER_XVENT^{USA}, INC. Two FTE were already in place and we sub-contracted three Health Educators for full-time health mentoring in-house.

15. What are the program's annual operational costs? For FY2007 the program budget is \$874,000 with an in-house mentoring call center of ten sub-contracted full-time Health Educators, one administrative staff member and two FTE state employees.

16. How is the program funded? The OK Health program is funded through the Employees Benefits Council.

17. Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations? If YES, please indicate the citation number. No.

18. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program? Specific purchases for the program are licensing and Internet web portal fee through our contracted vendor. The mentor call center consists of computers, telephones, printers and fax machines.

19. To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator's name, present address, telephone number and email address. Yes. A Roundtable Group designed the OK Health Mentoring program in 2001-2002 made-up of various state agencies and our health plans at that time. Nancy A. Haller, Manager of the State Wellness Program facilitated the group to design a blue print for the implementation of the OK Health program. Once the blue print was designed, Nancy A. Haller researched the ideas and found the INTER_XVENT^{USA}, INC. and contacted the President of INTER_XVENT^{USA}, INC. Neil Gordon, MD, MPH.

20. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? No

21. Has the program been fully implemented? Yes. January 1, 2006 to all 37,000 FTE state employees.

22. Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program's effectiveness in addressing the defined problem(s) or issue(s). Provide tangible examples. The program's effectiveness can be measured by the reduction in health claim costs during the pilot, and the overall health improvement of employees participating in the fully implemented program. Another very important aspect is the program's ability to galvanize the support of different groups vital to creating a partnership and commitment to improving the health of State employees: Statewide agency directors, all contracted health plans offered to State employees, the Oklahoma State Department of Health Chronic Disease Services, and the employees. With little more than a year in the fully implemented program, and already other public entities are wanting to contract with the Employees Benefits Council to provide the OK Health mentoring program to their employees.

23. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception? In the first month (January 2007) of the fully implemented program, more than 5,500 State employees expressed an interest in participating in the OK Health program. As of March 9, 2007, 6,437 employees expressed an interest in the program, 4,805 have completed the required Health Risk Assessment, 3,844 have completed initial enrollment into the program and 2,397 are actively being mentored.

24. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program? Convincing decision makers that the initial investment of resources will pay dividends: measuring the return on investment.