

Participating in CDC's Work@Health® Program

Cedars-Sinai's employee wellness program was established in 2010. Employee Wellness Administrator Mitch Martens and his assistant are the primary staff members dedicated to the program. Multiple committees and wellness champions from across the organization also support workplace health initiatives.

With training and effort, employers of all sizes and types can plan and implement a workplace health program. Employers can learn from the experiences of employers like Cedars-Sinai about how to plan strategies and anticipate implementation challenges.

Since Martens took over the wellness program in 2012, Cedars-Sinai has implemented several employee health initiatives. Examples include fitness activities and competitions, wellness campaigns (like Employee Wellness Day), and clinical prevention programs (like health screenings, smoking cessation services, and Men's

Health Week). Martens has also worked to promote environmental changes, like healthier options in the cafeteria, improvements to stairwells to promote use, and sit-stand desks for employees.

Martens heard about the Work@Health® program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) from a colleague who was planning to enroll. Martens was looking for ways to expand his employer's worksite wellness program, and CDC's reputation sparked his interest. He decided to apply to the program.

The [Work@Health®](#) program is designed to teach employers how to improve the health of their workers (and workers' families) by using prevention and wellness strategies that focus on chronic health conditions. Well-designed, science-based, and comprehensive workplace wellness programs can improve the health of individuals and companies, lower health care costs, and increase worker productivity.

Cedars-Sinai was selected for the blended model of the Work@Health® program. The blended model gave Martens the flexibility to move through the first six training modules at his own pace at times that were most convenient to him. He was then able to interact with instructors and other participating employers during the hands-on

Organization Background

Cedars-Sinai Health System

- « Established in 1902
- « Private nonprofit
- « Industry sector: Health care and social assistance
- « Location: Los Angeles, California
- « About 14,000 employees
- « 67% women, 33% men

Cedars-Sinai Health System is a nonprofit, independent, health care organization known for providing the highest quality patient care through a dedication to excellence, compassion, and innovation that is rooted in the Judaic tradition. As the largest nonprofit hospital in the western United States, Cedars-Sinai is committed to leadership and excellence in delivering quality health care services, expanding the horizons of medical knowledge through biomedical research, educating and training doctors and other health care professionals, and striving to improve the health status of its community. Cedars-Sinai achieves this mission through the contributions of more than 2,000 doctors in every clinical specialty, about 14,000 employees, 2,000 volunteers, and 15,000 fundraising support group members.

portion of the training, which was held in May 2014 and followed by 6 to 10 months of personalized support from a Work@Health® technical assistance provider.

Program Overview

Cedars-Sinai's strategic vision is to attract, retain, develop, and optimize the performance of the best and most respected employees and for Cedars-Sinai to be the preferred health care employer. Martens uses this vision to shape the organization's wellness program.

"Well-being is multidimensional, similar to how health care takes a holistic approach to treating the whole person," Martens explained. "Rather than offering one challenge or solution to our entire employee population, we try to meet each employee where they are on their own personal wellness journey and then encourage them to choose what's important for them today."

Martens believes this personalized approach is especially well-suited for a large, diverse organization like Cedars-Sinai. But to reach as many employees as possible, a thoughtful and clearly defined foundation is required.

The Work@Health® curriculum emphasizes the importance of assessing the health needs and interests of employees before planning a wellness program. In the Work@Health® training, Martens learned how to use the [CDC Worksite Health ScoreCard](#). This free tool allows employers to assess their health promotion and disease prevention programs, identify gaps, and set priorities across health topics. As Martens noted, "You can't effectively know where to go until you first evaluate where you are today."

Using the ScoreCard, Martens completed an organizational assessment and planned wellness initiatives that aligned with Cedars-Sinai's institutional goals in the following six areas: growth,

people and culture, integration, affiliations, employee experience and engagement, and value. Martens applied these goals to the wellness program and developed initiatives for each.

Employers selected to participate in Work@Health® were assigned to one of three models, all of which delivered the same comprehensive workplace health curriculum.

1. The hands-on model was an on-site, instructor-led, one day training workshop held in one of six regional locations.
2. The online model allowed employers to move through the curriculum independently over several weeks using a web-based learning platform.
3. The blended model included a combination of hands-on and online learning strategies.



*Cedars-Sinai's multidimensional model of well-being.
Image provided by Cedars-Sinai.*

GROWTH: Martens' goal was to expand the wellness program across Cedars-Sinai to reach more employees. To meet this goal, he enhanced the program's website with health education and promotional materials and wellness resources that are diverse, relevant, and easy to access. After gathering feedback from an employee focus group, Martens worked with in-house web developers to build a visually appealing and easy-to-navigate website for the employee wellness program. He partnered with Cedars-Sinai's insurance carrier and consulted with other programs and departments—including the Employee Assistance Program, Food and Nutrition, Safety, Employee Health, Nursing, Academic Affairs, and Organization Development and Learning—to identify ways for them to contribute.

PEOPLE AND CULTURE: Marten's goal was to advance Cedars-Sinai's culture of well-being to foster high performance, continuous learning, innovation, and teamwork by identifying wellness champions across the health system. Martens knew that he needed champions, which he called employee wellness ambassadors, to help spread the wellness program's



Cedars-Sinai employee wellness ambassador t-shirt.
Photo provided by Cedars-Sinai.

messages and activities. The Work@Health® program highlighted the power of having champions from all levels of the organization serve as role models, resources, and program advocates. Martens developed a communication plan that outlined the ambassadors'

responsibilities, formally recognized their service, and created a forum for sharing ideas. He used existing events and communication channels, like Cedars Sinai's annual Employee Well-Being Fair and monthly Wellness Grand Rounds, to recruit ambassadors.

INTEGRATION: Martens' goal was to align wellness program efforts with other Cedars-Sinai departments and initiatives by participating in other employee events. He worked with several departments to contribute to shared objectives, share resources, and showcase Cedars-Sinai's wellness program. For example, he made sure the program was represented at the health system's annual Safety Fair, Benefits Fair, and Heart Institute Walk. Martens also supported the Transplant Center by offering fitness programs to the center's employees, and he helped institute a "Stress-Free Day" in the Imaging Department.

AFFILIATIONS: Martens' goal was to cultivate external local and national partnerships to advance the wellness program. For example, he partnered with several local health and nutrition facilities to offer discounted rates to Cedars-Sinai employees. He is a member of [Wellness Councils of America \(WELCOA\)](#) which provides training, recognition, tools, and resources for workplace health programs. He also helped Cedars-Sinai achieve platinum status with the American Heart Association as a [Fit-Friendly Worksite](#).



Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, Los Angeles.
Photo provided by Cedars-Sinai.

EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE AND ENGAGEMENT:

Martens' goal was to evaluate employee satisfaction and engagement with wellness initiatives by studying the use of sit-stand desks to assess whether Cedars-Sinai should offer them system wide. Ten employees from across the health system were offered the chance to use sit-stand desks for 6 months and then provide feedback. The employees rated the desks favorably and wanted to keep them at the end of the trial period. By the end of 2015, more than 60 sit-stand workstations had been purchased by different departments, and Martens expects this trend to continue.

VALUE: Martens' goal was to evaluate initiatives and metrics associated with the wellness program by organizing information about health and wellness indicators in an easy-to-read format. The Work@Health® program's emphasis on evaluating worksite wellness activities resonated with Martens. He created a set of metrics based on the goals and expected outcomes of the wellness program. He used the following indicators and data sources to assess program success and areas for improvement:

- Use of evidence-based worksite health promotion interventions, using data from the ScoreCard and other organizational assessment tools.
- Status of employee health risks, using results from annual biometric screenings and health risk assessments and clinical data from Cedars-Sinai's insurance carrier.
- Level of employee engagement, using data from employee satisfaction and participation surveys.
- Perceptions of the organization's wellness culture, using data from worksite surveys that employees complete at monthly Wellness Grand Rounds, the annual Well-Being Day, and when new on-site wellness classes are offered.

Martens uses these metrics to evaluate the overall program, make improvements, request future funding and support, and show employees the benefits of working to improve their health. Because he had supporting data, Martens was able to put several wellness initiatives into place, including the following:

- Painting stairwells to make them more attractive and encourage employees to use them.
- Obtaining funds to build an outdoor basketball court, which is used daily for pick-up games during lunch hours.
- Integrating a “Take 5 and Thrive” segment into department meetings. Martens presents information about the health risks of sedentary behavior and encourages managers and employees to spend a few minutes standing,

stretching, or engaging in some type of physical activity during meetings.

- Producing “Work Out of the Week” (WOW) videos that promote desk- or office-based stretching and movement. Cedars-Sinai’s wellness ambassadors record employees doing stretches and exercises at their workstations. They post these videos on the Cedars-Sinai YouTube channel and link to them from the organization’s wellness website. The website had 2,757 views in 2015. The February 2016 [video](#) features desk exercises for the neck and shoulders.

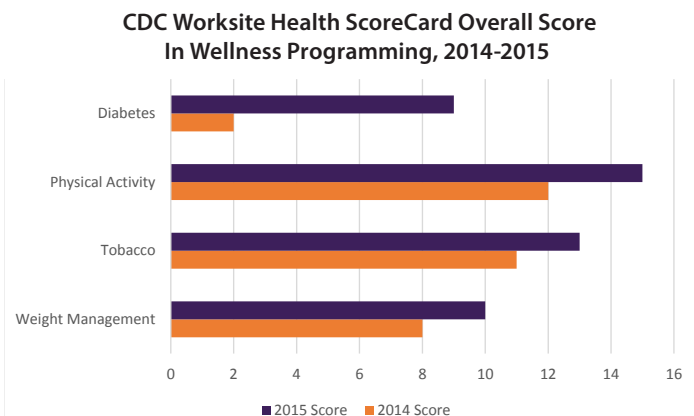
Program Success

Like all of the employers participating in the Work@Health® program, Cedars-Sinai used the CDC Worksite Health ScoreCard to assess the extent to which it had evidence-based health promotion strategies in place before and after the program. Cedars-Sinai increased its total ScoreCard score from 152 to 168 out of a possible 264 points. The organization showed the biggest improvement (more than tripling its score) in the number of strategies it offered that focused on diabetes prevention and control. The ScoreCard module for this area assesses the extent to which organizations provide screening for prediabetes and diabetes risk factors, education and counseling, access to self-management programs, and health insurance coverage to manage diabetes. Cedars-Sinai also increased the number of strategies it offered to address tobacco control, physical activity, and weight management.

Examples of evidence-based strategies Cedars-Sinai put in place during its Work@Health® training using the ScoreCard that it did not have in place in 2014 included the following:

- Providing a series of educational seminars, workshops, and classes on preventing and controlling diabetes.
- Providing brochures, videos, posters, pamphlets, newsletters, and other written or online information that address the benefits of physical activity.
- Providing or promoting free or subsidized tobacco cessation counseling.

- Providing free or subsidized body composition measurements, like height and weight, body mass index (BMI) scores, or other body fat assessments (beyond self-report), followed by directed feedback and clinical referral when appropriate.



Martens said he believes that the key to the success of Cedars-Sinai’s wellness program is that it empowers employees to choose their own paths. For example, instead of using an organization-wide initiative like a weight loss challenge for all 14,000 employees, the program works to “meet employees where they are today.” He believes this approach builds engagement and trust.

“Be your own wellness architect. Our future is within your future, not the other way around.”

—Mitch Martens, employee wellness administrator at Cedars-Sinai

He adds that he believes Cedars-Sinai will achieve better wellness overall—as both a community and as an employer—if its employees achieve their own

personal well-being. He encourages employees to, “Be your own wellness architect. Our future is within your future, not the other way around.”

Learning from Work@Health®

In a survey after the Atlanta training session in 2014, all participants said they found the problem-solving activities useful, understood how to apply what they had learned, and felt that they would be able to use what they had learned from the training at their jobs. In addition, 90% would recommend the training to others in their position.

At the end of the training, participants were asked to share lessons learned. Martens said he learned that SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound) objectives are needed to effectively

evaluate a worksite wellness initiative and ensure accountability.

About 6 months after the training, participants were asked what they had done with the information they had learned in the training. All participants said they had used the information to develop a worksite health plan and begin taking action. In addition, 88% said they had shared the information with others in their organizations, engaged leadership for support, established a health promotion committee, and collected data for program development.

Challenges

Before participating in the Work@Health® program, Martens was already running an active wellness program. However, he had struggled with the challenge of worksite wellness not being integrated into other programs and departments in his organization. To overcome this challenge, Martens worked to build relationships across programs and departments by finding shared goals. He also used the wellness website as a central place to post information about health and wellness activities across campus. For example, he collaborated with the Safety Department to promote its new program on safe patient lifting by adding the program’s training

materials to the wellness website. He also partnered with the Rideshare program to promote its bike-to-work campaign.

Because Cedars-Sinai is a large, 24/7 organization, getting information from and to all employees is challenging. Employee schedules and locations—as well as competing priorities and emergencies—do not allow everyone to participate in all planned activities, like health fairs or fitness classes. Martens focused on making sure the wellness website gave employees the tools and resources they needed to create their own path to well-being.

What’s Next?

Over the next 12 months, Cedars-Sinai plans the following activities for worksite health promotion:

- Create an overarching strategic plan for an employee wellness institute that will more formally integrate health and wellness initiatives across the health system.
- Work with the Benefits Department to make resources more accessible to employees on a mobile device.
- Focus on populations at higher risk that are hard to reach or may have been overlooked previously. Examples include male employees, employees with limited mobility who may not participate in traditional physical activity programs, and those dealing with financial stress.



The Work@Health® employer-training program is an initiative of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to promote workplace wellness through employer education, training, and technical assistance. Work@Health® training provides employers with knowledge and tools through a comprehensive curricula to promote good health in their work places to prevent or reduce chronic illness and disability, and improve productivity.