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Christopher Williams
National Health Promotion Associates

Jessica Samuolis
Sacred Heart University, samuolisj@sacredheart.edu

Kenneth W. Griffin
Weill Cornell Medical College

Gilbert J. Botvin
Weill Cornell Medical College

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Young Adults in the Workplace: A Multisite Initiative of Substance Use Prevention Programs

Edited by
Jeremy W. Bray, Deborah M. Galvin, and Laurie A. Cluff

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3040 Cornwallis Road, PO Box 12194, Research Triangle Park, NC 27709-2194 USA
rtipress@rti.org
www.rti.org

CHAPTER 7

LifeSkills Training Wellness Program: An Application for Young Adults in Supermarkets

Christopher Williams,[1] Jessica Samuolis,[1] Kenneth W. Griffin,[2] and Gilbert J. Botvin[2]

[1]National Health Promotion Associates, White Plains, NY;
[2]Weill Cornell Medical College, New York, NY

Introduction

To address the need for workplace substance use prevention programming, National Health Promotion Associates (NHPA) developed the LifeSkills Training Wellness Program (LST-WP) with funding from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) Young Adults in the Workplace (YIW) grant program. LST-WP adapts and extends the highly effective, school-based LifeSkills Training (LST) model program (Botvin, 1998; Botvin et al., 1995) and provides comprehensive skills training for adolescent and young adult employees in communication, problem-solving, conflict resolution, drug resistance, and related life skills. Overall, the program is designed to be highly flexible to meet employee and manager needs across different worksites and industries. This chapter discusses the content and implementation of LST-WP and describes the target population of the NHPA YIW grant, the instructional techniques of LST-WP, and process evaluation tools for the program.

Program Description

The LST Model Program

The LST program was initially developed for middle schools and has since proven to be quite flexible. The LST middle school program is a broad-based, multicomponent competence enhancement intervention that teaches social skills, self-management skills, and drug resistance skills. The social skills component is designed to improve important interpersonal skills to help young

people communicate and negotiate effectively and assertively, handle a variety of social interactions, and resolve interpersonal conflicts. The self-management component is designed to foster the development of decision-making and problem-solving skills and provides young people with skills for maintaining self-control and coping with anxiety, anger, and frustration. LST also impacts knowledge and attitudes concerning drug use, normative expectations, and skills for resisting drug use influences from peers and the media.

The overarching goals of the LST activities are to provide young people with the skills needed to resist negative influences from peers and the media, to reduce the internal psychological forces that may motivate substance use, and to boost overall resilience. LST is grounded in the principles of social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), which outlines the importance of modeling and reinforcement in shaping behavior. Problem behavior theory (Jessor & Jessor, 1977) suggests that young people engage in risky behaviors, such as substance use, because they view these behaviors as functional for achieving goals (e.g., looking mature, becoming popular). Accordingly, problem behavior prevention strategies need to focus on improving an individual's psychosocial skills.

Over the past 25 years, more than 20 peer-reviewed articles containing analyses of 17 separate cohorts of students have demonstrated that the LST program is highly effective, typically reducing alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other illicit drug use by 50 percent or more. These studies (all randomized controlled trials) range from initial small-scale efficacy studies (Botvin & Eng, 1980; Botvin et al., 1980; Botvin et al., 1983) to large-scale effectiveness trials with suburban white youth (Botvin et al., 1990; Botvin et al., 1995) and with urban minority youth (Botvin et al., 2001a, 2001b). In addition, the positive behavioral effects of LST have been shown to be durable, lasting until the end of high school (Botvin et al., 1995). Moreover, one recent study found that students who received LST in junior high school reported lower rates of HIV risk behavior when followed up with 10 years later as young adults (Griffin et al., 2006), demonstrating that the prevention effects of LST can last well beyond the high school years and can generalize to other risk behaviors. LST has also been shown to be effective in reducing other high-risk behaviors, including binge drinking (Botvin et al., 2001b) and risky driving behavior (Griffin et al., 2004). Furthermore, several independent research teams have shown positive behavioral effects of LST on a variety of substance use outcomes (Fraguela et al., 2003; Trudeau et al., 2003; Zollinger et al., 2003).

The LifeSkills Training Wellness Program (LST-WP)

In light of LST's strong theoretical framework, track record of effectiveness, highly successful program characteristics, and versatility of use in a range of settings, the existing LST model program was an ideal candidate to be adapted to the workplace setting. LST-WP builds on the LST approach and is adapted for an older group of adolescents and young adults who are employed outside the home. LST-WP materials were developed to be appropriate for an older, diverse, employed target population; to be relevant to important transitions in adolescent and young adult employees' lives and careers; and to incorporate the contextual factors of the workplace. LST-WP maintains the core components, key skills, and interactive nature of the model intervention while being highly flexible to meet employee and manager needs across different worksites and industries. In addition to content to help build social and self-management skills in and outside of the workplace, LST-WP contains exercises and activities on time and financial management, risk-taking related to substance use, and building a safe and drug-free workplace.

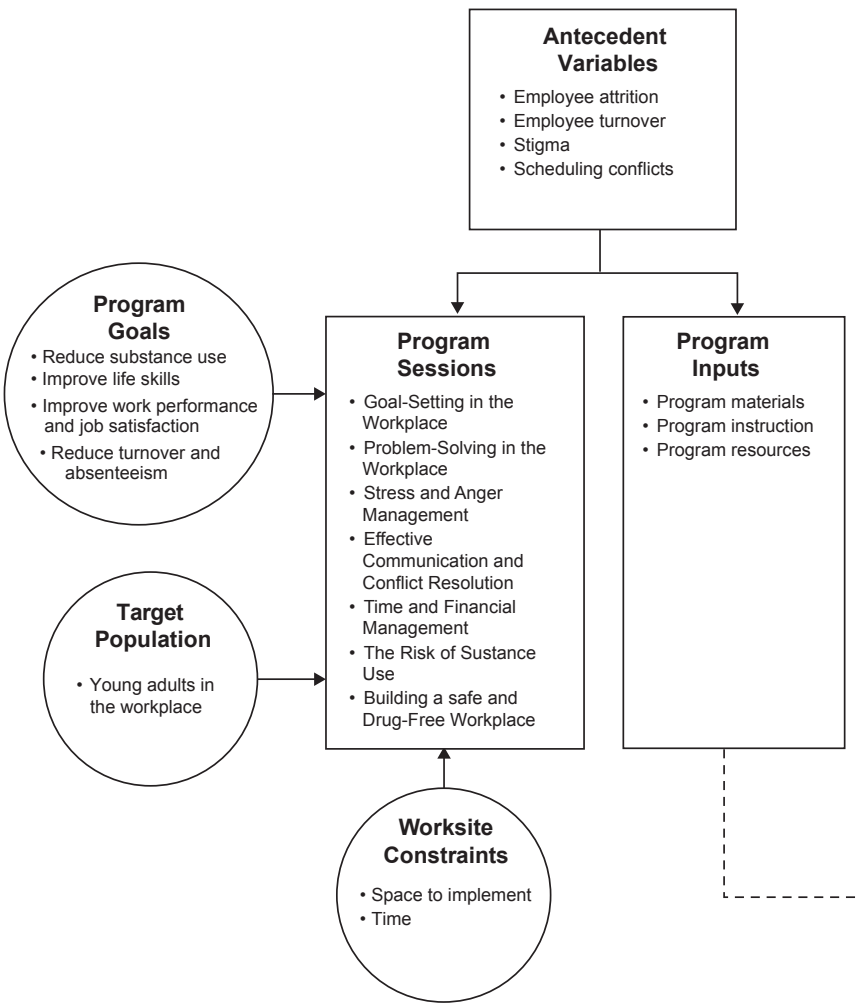
The first three program sessions teach employees how to set realistic goals for their personal and professional lives. The next two sessions focus on interpersonal skills, emphasizing that success involves being able to function effectively in a variety of situations. The last three sessions focus on being organized at home and in the workplace. The eight sessions are described in detail in the LST-WP Session Content section of this chapter.

LST-WP Logic Model

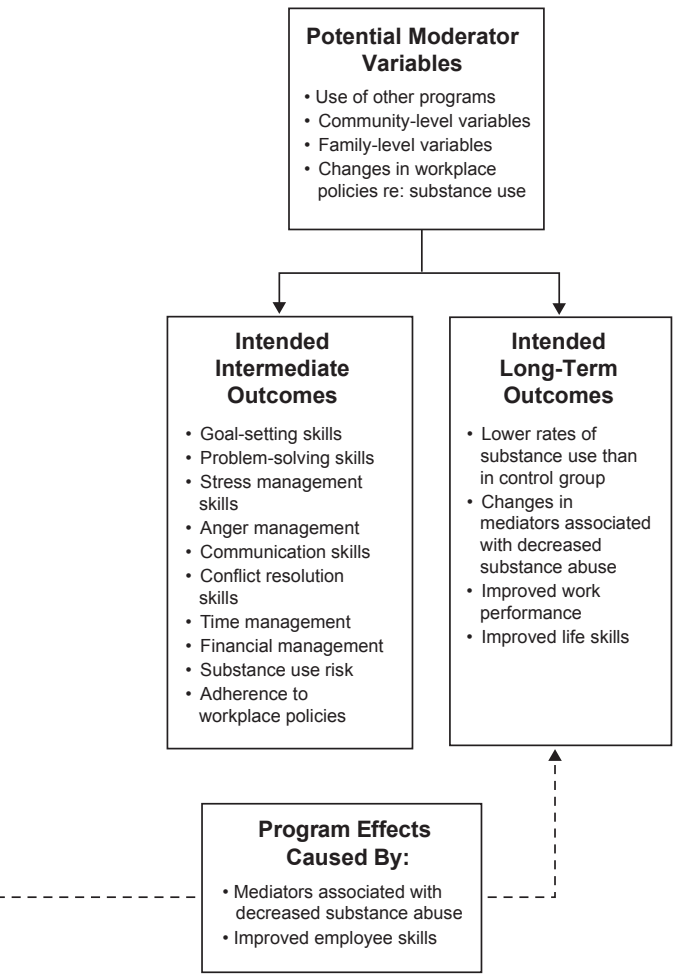
A logic model has been developed to depict the principles and concepts underlying LST-WP (Figure 7.1). The essential program elements include eight program sessions taught in hourly increments or in a more compact format depending on individual worksite needs. The delivery format of LST-WP sessions is influenced by several **worksite constraints**, including available worksite space and time to implement the program. In addition, necessary **program inputs** include the program materials and resources. A number of **intermediate outcomes** result from proper and sufficient implementation of LST-WP. Employees learn effective goal-setting and steps toward reaching these goals using key skills and resources available to them. To achieve goals, employees learn how to make reasoned decisions and deal effectively with complex problems. Employees also learn how to deal with setbacks and difficulties by effectively managing emotional reactions to stress and anger. In addition to intermediate outcomes related to self-management skills, LST-WP

also teaches employees to function effectively in a variety of interpersonal situations, to interact with others in positive ways by communicating clearly, and to resolve interpersonal conflicts effectively. Several intermediate outcomes are related to an employee's being organized in his or her personal life and in the workplace, including skills to effectively manage money and time, knowledge about the negative impact that substance use has on achieving goals, and knowledge of workplace policies related to substance use. **Antecedent variables** that may negatively impact program delivery and inputs include employee attrition, employee turnover, perceived stigma of participation, and scheduling conflicts.

Figure 7.1 LifeSkills Training Wellness Program logic model



Intermediate outcomes serve to mediate the effects of LST-WP and impact the hypothesized **long-term outcomes** of the program, which include low rates of substance abuse, changes in mediators associated with decreased substance abuse, improved work performance, and improved life skills. **Potential moderator variables** that may impact intermediate and long-term outcomes include the use of other programs, such as worksite substance abuse programs and smoking cessation or stress management programs; community-level variables, such as changes in local employment patterns and poverty rates; family-level variables, such as domestic violence, divorce, or substance-using



relatives; and changes in workplace policies related to substance use, such as the implementation of employee drug testing.

LST-WP Session Content

The eight LST-WP sessions are designed to be developmentally appropriate for diverse groups of adolescent and young adult employees and to be flexible in their implementation to meet the varied needs of different work settings. Table 7.1 summarizes the eight sessions.

Table 7.1 LifeSkills Training Wellness Program sessions

Self	Interpersonal	Organizational	LST-WP Session	At Work	In Life
●			1. Goal-Setting in the Workplace (Got Goals….?)	●	
●			2. Problem-Solving in the Workplace (What's the Problem?)	●	●
●	●		3. Stress and Anger Management (Can You Cope?)	●	●
	●	●	4 and 5. (two sessions) Effective Communication and Conflict Resolution (Let's Talk About It)	●	●
	●	●	6. Time and Financial Management (It's About Time—and Money)	●	●
	●	●	7. The Risk of Substance Use (Risky Business)	●	●
		●	8. Building a Safe and Drug-Free Workplace (Keeping It Safe)	●	

Each of the eight sessions contains the following four sections: Think About It, Figure It Out, Do It Now, and Make It Happen. Think About It serves as the introductory section and allows the participants to begin exploring the topic. In the Figure It Out section, the session topic is discussed further and the related skills are introduced. The participants then practice these skills in the Do It Now section. The Make It Happen section reviews the session topic and concepts and encourages participants to apply the skills outside of the program workshop. Key vocabulary and relevant tips are interspersed throughout each session.

The LST-WP materials include a Facilitator's Manual and an accompanying participant guide (LifeSkills Planner). In addition to the eight sessions,

the LifeSkills Planner includes sections for quick tips, a calendar to track milestones, extra worksheets, resources, and selected site-specific workplace policies. Participants are encouraged to use their LifeSkills Planners to practice the skills introduced in the workshop and to use the resource section as a guide to find additional information on the program topics discussed.

Session 1: Goal-Setting in the Workplace. Session 1 teaches participants effective goal-setting, the value of short- and long-term goals, and steps toward reaching these goals using key skills and available resources.

Session 2: Problem-Solving in the Workplace. The problem-solving session is implemented early in the sequence, and program facilitators encourage the integration of the skills learned in this session throughout the remainder of the program. Workshop participants identify common problems that arise in the workplace and then identify factors that influence how people respond to these types of problems. Participants are then introduced to a step-by-step method for effective problem solving and practice applying the technique using the common workplace problems identified previously through group discussion.

Session 3: Stress and Anger Management. Facilitators use group discussion and interactive activities to discuss and practice the session goals. Participants identify the causes of stress and anger in the workplace and their personal lives, the physical symptoms of stress and anger, and common responses to stress and anger. In addition, participants examine personal triggers and the effects of unmanaged stress, and they explore how unmanaged stress in one part of life affects other parts of life. They also practice techniques for stress and anger management.

Sessions 4 and 5: Effective Communication and Conflict Resolution. Sessions 4 and 5 include individual exercises, group discussion, and activities. Participants identify typical workplace misunderstandings and conflicts and consider their causes. They also explore the effects of misunderstandings and conflicts in the workplace and in one's personal life. Participants learn about verbal and nonverbal communication and are asked to consider the significance of both when communicating. Facilitators introduce specific steps for effective communication and conflict resolution to successfully move from conflict to resolution.

Session 6: Time and Financial Management. Session 6 includes group discussion, individual activities, and an interactive group activity. In this session, participants are asked to assess how much time they spend on various

activities throughout the course of a typical day and consider whether these activities help bring them closer to achieving their personal goals. They are given strategies to help them use their time more efficiently. In an effort to align their financial habits with efforts to achieve their goals, participants also spend time tracking personal expenses and monies spent. The LifeSkills Planner includes worksheets for attendees to use when creating budgets and setting financial goals.

Session 7: The Risk of Substance Use. Session 7 is delivered toward the end of the workshop and includes group discussion, brainstorming, and large and small group activities. Facilitators encourage participants to use and build on many of their newly acquired skills and strategies to protect themselves against pressures and conditions that might make them susceptible to intrapersonal and interpersonal pressures to engage in risk behaviors. Participants define the terms risk and drug, identify the effects of substance use and abuse on work performance and the work environment, explore the effects of substance use and abuse on personal goals, examine and define the progression of substance use from abstinence to experimentation to social use to abuse to addiction, and examine personal risk factors for the progression of substance use and abuse.

Session 8: Building a Safe and Drug-Free Workplace. Implemented at the end of the workshop, Session 8 orients participants to company policies promoting workplace wellness. Participants are then engaged in discussion and a small group activity to explore how policies contribute to creating and maintaining workplace and personal health.

LST-WP Instructional Techniques

LST-WP is taught using cognitive-behavioral skills training, facilitated group discussion, demonstrations, and traditional didactic teaching methods. Most of the material in the program is taught by facilitating group discussion and through skills training, although lectures and conventional didactic teaching methods are appropriate for some of the material. Because the major emphasis of LST-WP is on teaching personal self-management skills, social skills, and drug resistance skills, the most important intervention method is skills training. The cognitive-behavioral skills in the program are taught using a combination of instruction, demonstration, behavioral rehearsal, feedback, social reinforcement, and extended practice in the form of behavioral homework assignments.

Instruction and Demonstration. The first step in the skills training process involves instruction and demonstration. Instruction involves explaining a

particular skill to workshop participants in a careful step-by-step fashion, along with a clear explanation of when to use the skill. Demonstration involves showing attendees how to perform a particular skill. This is done by the program facilitator or by a participant who has already learned the skill being taught.

Behavioral Rehearsal. Once the skill has been explained and demonstrated by the LST-WP facilitator, participants are given the opportunity to practice the skill themselves through selected behavioral rehearsal scenarios. Participants take turns coming to the front of the room to role-play, using the skill being taught. The workshop can also be divided into small groups, with the program facilitator circulating from group to group to observe the participants practicing. The behavioral rehearsal scenarios are first described by the facilitator or a small group leader, and the exercises are kept brief so that as many participants as possible have a chance to participate.

Feedback. After participants rehearse the skills being taught, they are given feedback about the strengths and weaknesses of their skills performance. The facilitator conveys this information in a supportive manner so attendees understand which aspects of the skill they performed well and which need improvement. The facilitator's constructive feedback is designed to guide participants as they strive to improve and successively master the skills being taught.

Social Reinforcement. Because a primary objective of LST-WP is to reduce risk for substance use, the goal of the skills training is to improve the target skills and self-efficacy of each participant. Therefore, participants are assessed individually with respect to improvement over their own baseline levels. During and after the behavioral rehearsal exercises, the facilitator reinforces one or two positive elements of each participant's practice of the skill.

Extended Practice. The extended practice provides opportunities for additional practice of the target skills outside of the workshop to promote skill development and utilization. This is accomplished through behavioral homework assignments, which may include tasks such as repeating a calming self-statement throughout the day or using communicating-for-conflict-resolution steps in a situation at work. In addition to providing opportunities for practice in general, extended practice facilitates the use of new skills in situations outside of the workshop and encourages attendees to use these skills at work and in their everyday lives.

LST-WP Materials

The Facilitator's Manual provides instruction on strategies for interactive teaching and learning, step-by-step instructions for delivering each session, fully illustrated diagrams of all instructional materials, completed examples of all LifeSkills Planner worksheets, and a comprehensive directory of Web-based and other technical assistance resources for all content areas covered in the curriculum. The LifeSkills Planner contains worksheets, information needed to participate in the activities for each session, extra worksheets for participants to use after the workshop, and resources for all content areas covered in the curriculum.

The Facilitator's Manual and the LifeSkills Planner are organized by the specific sessions. The Facilitator's Manual consists of session materials, an introduction, and resource pages. The LifeSkills Planner consists of exercises and activities for each session to reinforce the knowledge, attitudes, and skills taught in the program. Each workshop participant receives a LifeSkills Planner, which serves as a daily organizational planner for work and personal use. Program facilitators use the Facilitator's Manual to conduct the workshops. Each section includes pages from the LifeSkills Planner. Sections are visibly separated with titled tabs. The session goals, materials needed, key vocabulary, and step-by-step instructions are presented in the beginning of each session. Points to make, relevant examples, and sidebars are included to reinforce key concepts and guide the facilitator through the activity. Reproducible resources are provided where necessary.

LST-WP Implementation Flexibility

LST-WP is designed to offer an optimal level of implementation flexibility. Facilitators can be either internal or external to a worksite and are equally appropriate to lead workshops when adequately trained. The program is well suited for various kinds of worksites. It is also well suited for young employees who are making their initial entry into the workforce or for employees who have more experience in balancing the tasks, concerns, and stressors of home and work life. In addition, LST-WP was designed specifically to allow flexibility in scheduling so that it could be adopted by employers of shift workers, seasonal workers, or traditional "9 to 5" workers.

Flexibility of Providers. The program can be implemented by a variety of providers/facilitators. Ideally, program facilitators would be trained by one of NHPA's expert trainers (see the following section, Program Implementation). NHPA, the training and technical support company for LST, has a large cadre

of trainers available to train worksite staff to implement LST-WP with a high degree of fidelity. LST-WP can be implemented by staff internal to a given worksite. In large companies, these staff members are typically members of the human resources training department. NHPA's trainers are geographically dispersed to readily offer provider trainingand support services to companies throughout the country. For smaller companies or for those that prefer external facilitators, NHPA trainers can themselves serve as workshop facilitators.

Variety in Worksites and Employees. As part of the training and technical assistance that NHPA provides for LST program clients, we have repeatedly observed that the school-based LST has been effectively implemented in community-based settings, treatment centers, and after-school programs, attesting to the program's versatility. LST-WP can be incorporated easily into a variety of industries with different kinds of employees. The workshop activities are designed to be appropriate for laborers, individuals in administrative roles, and professional-level workers.

Flexibility of Scheduling. LST-WP is designed to offer worksites flexibility regarding how the program is scheduled into the workday. The program can be taught at a rate of one session per week over 8 weeks. Using this implementation strategy, for example, worksites can schedule in-service trainings so that employees can participate in the workshop. An interval between workshops is optimal—even up to 1 month apart—to allow attendees to practice newly acquired skills at home and in their specific work settings. LST-WP can also be programmed as modules or mini-courses so that the entire program is conducted on 1 day or on consecutive days. Both types of schedules have been found to be effective in evaluation studies of the LST school model, suggesting that either implementation strategy could be effective for LST-WP.

Program Implementation

LST-WP is designed as a self-contained and complete prevention curriculum, giving facilitators all of the necessary program materials in one package. LST-WP is distinguished by the breadth and quality of the implementation materials and the availability of provider training and technical assistance resources. As facilitators go through the decision-making process to adopt LST-WP for the first time or to re-adopt materials, they are encouraged to consult with specially trained staff members who have LST-WP expertise.

Training and Support Resources

To ensure the successful implementation of LST-WP, training and technical assistance is provided by NHPA, which has an extensive 12-year history of providing training and technical support for the LST middle school program. NHPA offers professional trainings/workshops each year throughout the United States that take the form of 1-day in-service training workshops for teachers or prevention specialists. However, 2-day or 3-day training workshops are also available, depending on the implementation plan and the needs of a site. The provider-training workshops are informative, interactive, and fun, emphasizing the use of well-established skills training techniques, such as instruction, demonstration, feedback, reinforcement, and practice.

Target Population

The target population for the YIW initiative is young working adults aged 16 to 24. NHPA and a large supermarket chain collaborated to implement NHPA's LST-WP program. Twenty stores participated and had a combined workforce of nearly 5,000 employees, of which approximately 48 percent fell within the 16 to 24 target age range. The population within these 20 stores was 50 percent male and 84.3 percent white. Educational enrollment is not a consideration in defining the target population. Young adult employees in this supermarket chain typically work as cashiers, baggers, stockers, or clerks or in food preparation.

To support the YIW cross-site evaluation (see Chapter 8 for more information about the cross-site evaluation and the core survey measures), NHPA conducted a survey of LST-WP participants and a comparison sample of employees. Across three waves of data collection, 1,313 employees completed the baseline survey. Demographically, the survey respondents were similar to the target population in the stores. Slightly more than half (51.2 percent) of the survey respondents were male, 83.3 percent were white, and 75.8 percent were under age 21 at the time of their baseline survey.

Process Evaluation Resources

The implementation team conducted 53 workshops that were attended by 528 young employees. The process evaluation was designed to help determine whether the program was implemented as designed, assess receptivity to the intervention, and identify any events or factors that may have impacted program implementation or other related activities. Information obtained

from a process evaluation will be meaningful in tracking the program dosage participants receive, informing the revision of program components or methods of program delivery, and facilitating the interpretation of outcome results.

Available process evaluation tools for LST-WP include a Fidelity Checklist, designed to enable the documentation of the programmatic components delivered and the assessment of fidelity of implementation. An Employee Feedback Tool to gauge participants' receptivity to the program is also available.

Fidelity Checklist

The Fidelity Checklist consists of a three-page questionnaire for each of the eight program sessions. Typically completed by an observer during program implementation, the checklist helps to track a program provider's adherence to the content and design of the program. Each questionnaire contains a series of yes/no items assessing whether the major objectives of the session and the related activities were covered during program implementation. Additionally, each checklist includes items in which the facilitator or observer is asked to estimate the percentage of time spent on lecture, discussion, demonstration, and practice. The checklist also includes an item on the total length of time of the session and an item regarding participants' responsiveness to the content. The average fidelity scores indicated that the majority of sessions adhered to the content and covered the objectives.

Employee Feedback Tool

Another process evaluation tool is the Employee Feedback Tool, which can be used to obtain participant feedback upon completion of program implementation. This feedback can be used to gauge receptivity to the program and to determine the extent to which participants believe the program and its related materials and activities are useful, interesting, and relevant. The four-page Employee Feedback Tool consists of open- and closed-ended items that assess the following: ease and frequency of use, reaction to the visual presentation of material and content, understanding of concepts presented, perceived utility/benefit of the program, and perceived appropriateness of program components/materials. The tool, which takes approximately 5 minutes to complete, is administered to workshop participants by the program facilitator at the end of each implementation workshop. To maintain anonymity, employees are instructed not to write their names on the forms.

Results from the Employee Feedback Tool revealed that the LST-WP workshop was well received by the employees, with employees reporting that the program was highly engaging and interesting. The vast majority of participants reported they would be able to use LST-WP skills in their personal life and at work.

Conclusions

To maintain a productive and viable workforce, health and wellness and disease prevention must continue to be a public health priority. Increasingly, employers are dedicating resources and time to health and wellness programs, such as LST-WP, to foster a healthy, safe, and drug-free workforce, which is linked to lower absenteeism and tardiness, greater job satisfaction and performance, lower turnover, and improved productivity. Prevention efforts offer the opportunity to proactively promote health and wellness and help to reduce costly reactive approaches to substance use, such as drug testing and treatment.

LST-WP is a research-based, innovative health and wellness program for adolescents and young adults in the workplace that is designed to help companies reduce employee health-risk behaviors that impact productivity and profitability. The program empowers employees to successfully balance their work and personal lives by developing skills in essential areas: goal-setting, problem-solving, stress and anger management, effective communication and conflict resolution, time and financial management, management of risky behavior, and workplace safety. It is specially designed to offer an optimal level of flexibility for a variety of employees in a broad range of industries.

As new workplace prevention programs such as LST-WP are developed and tested, it will be critical that the most effective programs reach the employees who can benefit the most from them. To have a meaningful impact on an increasingly competitive workforce and commercial market, researchers, policy makers, and prevention practitioners should explore new ways to enhance the adoption and utilization of workplace prevention programs. A first step will be to ensure that employers are knowledgeable about such programs and receive the necessary training and technical assistance to implement these programs with fidelity and a focus toward long-term sustainability.

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