

2017 Model Practices

Applicant Information

Full Name:

Valerie Crow

Company:

District 3, Unit 1: Cobb & Douglas Public Health

Title:

Communications Director

Email:

valerie.crow@dph.ga.gov

Phone:

770-514-3109

City:

Marietta

State:

GA

Zip:

30008-4010

Model Practice Title

Please provide the name or title of your practice: *

Enhancing Employee Engagement Through a Comprehensive Internal Communications Strategy

Practice Categories

Model and Promising Practices are stored in an online searchable database. Applications may align with more than one practice category. Please select all the practice areas that apply.: *

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Access to Care | <input type="checkbox"/> Advocacy and Policy Making | <input type="checkbox"/> Animal Control | <input type="checkbox"/> Coalitions and Partnerships | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Communications/Public Relations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Involvement | <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Competence | <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Preparedness | <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Health | <input type="checkbox"/> Food Safety |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Global Climate Change | <input type="checkbox"/> Health Equity | <input type="checkbox"/> HIV/STI | <input type="checkbox"/> Immunization | <input type="checkbox"/> Infectious Disease |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Informatics | <input type="checkbox"/> Information Technology | <input type="checkbox"/> Injury and Violence Prevention | <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing and Promotion | <input type="checkbox"/> Maternal-Child and Adolescent Health |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organizational Practices | <input type="checkbox"/> Other Infrastructure and Systems | <input type="checkbox"/> Organizational Practices | <input type="checkbox"/> Primary Care | <input type="checkbox"/> Quality Improvement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Research and Evaluation | <input type="checkbox"/> Tobacco | <input type="checkbox"/> Vector Control | <input type="checkbox"/> Water Quality | <input type="checkbox"/> Workforce |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conference Theme: Bridging Clinical Medicine and Population Health | | | | |

Other::

Is this practice evidence based, if so please explain. :

Winnable Battles

To keep pace with emerging public health challenges and to address the leading causes of death and disability, CDC initiated an effort called Winnable Battles to achieve measurable impact quickly. Winnable Battles are public health priorities with large-scale impact on health and known effective strategies to address them. Does this practice address any CDC's seven Winnable Battles? If so, please choose from the following:: *

- | | | | | |
|---|--|--|----------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food Safety | <input type="checkbox"/> HIV in the U.S. | <input type="checkbox"/> Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity | <input type="checkbox"/> Tobacco | <input type="checkbox"/> Healthcare-associated Infections |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Motor Vehicle Injuries | <input type="checkbox"/> Teen Pregnancy | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None | | |

Overview: Provide a brief summary of the practice in this section (750 Word Maximum)

Your summary must address all the questions below:

- Brief description of LHD- location, demographics of population served in your community
- Describe public health issue
- Goals and objectives of the proposed practice
- How was the practice implemented/activities
- Results/Outcomes (list process milestones and intended/actual outcomes and impacts.
 - Were all of the objectives met?
 - What specific factors led to the success of this practice?
- Public Health impact of practice
- Website for your program, or LHD.

750 Word Maximum

Brief Description: Recognizing our employees as our greatest resource, Cobb & Douglas Public Health (CDPH), an accredited health department located in the northwest suburbs of Atlanta, Georgia, has taken a proactive and innovative approach to enhancing morale through the implementation of a comprehensive Internal Communications Strategy (ICS). The primary objective of this Strategy is to provide multiple avenues for Cobb & Douglas Public Health (CDPH) employees to feel valued and actively engage in improving CDPH. The CDPH Leadership Team identified a need to address internal communication and morale after reviewing declining employee satisfaction rates, since 2009. According to an FY2013 (July 1, 2012-June 30, 2013) Employee Satisfaction Survey, Cobb & Douglas Public Health (CDPH) employees felt: • Undercompensated (pay and benefits; this has dropped somewhat in recent years but has consistently remained low since 2009; Benefits are not seen as positive rewards) • Understaffed (continually falling over time) • Unrecognized and unheard Overall, CDPH employees felt undervalued for the work they performed and they felt their opinions were unheard. In response, both the CDPH Leadership Team and Employee Enhancement Committee (EEC), led by the Communications Director, developed a targeted approach to improving morale through eight specific strategies identified in the Comprehensive Internal Communication Strategy (ICS). This model practice application summarizes strategies health departments can take to improve satisfaction rates among employees. The effectiveness of this process continues to be monitored each year through the Employee Satisfaction Survey. CDPH acknowledges that communication alone cannot improve key components of morale, such as compensation, benefits or shortages in staff levels. However, communication is an essential ingredient to ensure employees feel recognized and appreciated for their contributions. The ICS demonstrates CDPH's commitment to valuing its employees by providing staff with a voice to influence the organizational culture while building trust and morale. CDPH is pleased by the success of the ICS's implementation. All of the goals and objectives continue to be achieved and the ICS has proven to increase satisfaction levels of the staff for several years as seen in the yearly scores from the Employee Satisfaction Survey. Through this practice, CDPH aims to share with others its approach to strengthening the public health workforce. Overview: CDPH is located in the Metro Atlanta area, with locations in both Cobb and Douglas Counties. The population for both counties combined is around 860,000-and growing! As the population served by CDPH continues to grow and diversify, numerous factors, including the relocation of the Atlanta Braves Stadium to Cobb County, have significantly shaped the current and emerging future public health needs facing the community. As CDPH strives to respond to greater demands for services, the health department recognizes its limited capacity. CDPH has taken a deliverable approach to assessing its internal operations, particularly related to its workforce to find ways to provide effective and innovative approaches to public health practice. CDPH early on recognized that while the department is effective in retaining a highly qualified and dedicated workforce, CDPH employee satisfaction levels, which are monitored annual through an employee satisfaction survey, were dwindling. In response, during the FY2014 Annual Strategic Planning Retreat, CDPH's Leadership Team formed a strategic goal specific to workforce enhancement which would be championed by both the Office of Human Resources and the Office of Communications. Part of this goal included the Leadership Team and the EEC working together on the development and implementation of the ICS. A CDPH Internal Communications Plan was then developed that would demonstrate improved satisfaction levels. More specifically, the plan would ensure CDPH employees feel valued and have the opportunity to share their opinions and improve performance. The ICS consists of eight strategies ranging from rewarding employees who go beyond the norm through recognition and appreciation to build morale, to letting all employees know that they matter, to keeping employees in the know. After collecting data from the Employee Satisfaction Survey for several years, CDPH, was able to move the dial in making employees feeling valued, by giving them the opportunity to share their opinions and by giving them the chance to make the organization a better place to work. All the goals and objectives of the plan were met. The average internal communications rating per year has shown an increase from 3.71 in FY2014 to 3.81 in FY2016. The CDPH Internal Communications Strategy has been successful because each of the eight components highlight an area within CDPH that needed to be addressed. This includes giving staff the opportunity for their voices to be heard, and making sure they feel good about coming to work. The success of the ICS also provides the motivation the staff needs to stay engaged throughout the day.

Responsiveness and Innovation

A Model Practice must be responsive to a particular local public health problem or concern. An innovative practice must be (1) **new to the field of public health (and not just new to your health department)** OR (2) **a creative use of an existing tool or practice**, including but not limited to use of an Advanced Practice Centers (APC) development tool, The Guide to Community Preventive Services, Healthy People 2020 (HP 2020), Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP), Protocol for Assessing Community Excellence in Environmental Health (PACE EH). Examples of an inventive use of an existing tool or practice are: tailoring to meet the needs of a specific population, adapting from a different discipline, or improving the content.

- Statement of the problem/public health issue
- What target population is affected by problem (please include relevant demographics)
 - What is the target population size?
 - What percentage did you reach?
- What has been done in the past to address the problem?
- Why is the current/proposed practice better?
- Is current practice innovative? How so/explain?
 - Is it new to the field of public health
- OR**
- Is it a creative use of existing tool or practice:

What tool or practice did you use in an original way to create your practice? (e.g., APC development tool, The Guide to Community Preventive Services, HP 2020, MAPP, PACE EH, a tool from NACCHO's Toolbox etc.)
- Is the current practice evidence-based? If yes, provide references (Examples of evidence-based guidelines include the Guide to

2000 Word Maximum

Please state the Responsiveness and Innovation of your practice (2000 Word Maximum) : *

According to a FY2013 CDPH Employee Satisfaction Survey, CDPH employees felt undervalued for the work they performed and that their opinions were unheard. This immediately prompted the Office of Communications to develop and implement an ICS that would not only help CDPH employees feel valued, but also give them the opportunity to share their opinions and to have an effect in making the organization a better place to work. Before the ICS was put in place, CDPH established an Employee Enhancement Committee (EEC), comprised of staff from each center and level within the organization, to oversee all internal communications, including employee recognition initiatives and staff events. The EEC recommended that an internal communications plan be put in place, and they also helped review and approve the final draft. Since the ICS has been in place, it has reached 100% of the CDPH employees, whether it be through The Spotlight (CDPH's internal newsletter), through employee recognition or through continuous email communication from supervisors to their employees. This includes both full and part-time employees, totaling 348 people (the target population of the ICS). The ICS enhances the EEC's current internal communications initiatives and truly helps make the committee's job easier.

LHD and Community Collaboration

The LHD should have a role in the practice's development and/or implementation. Additionally, the practice should demonstrate broad-based involvement and participation of community partners (e.g., government, local residents, business, healthcare, and academia). If the practice is internal to the LHD, it should demonstrate cooperation and participation within the agency (i.e., other LHD staff) and other outside entities, if relevant. An effective implementation strategy includes outlined, actionable steps that are taken to complete the goals and objectives and put the practice into action within the community.

- Goal(s) and objectives of practice
- What did you do to achieve the goals and objectives?
 - Steps taken to implement the program
- Any criteria for who was selected to receive the practice (if applicable)?
- What was the timeframe for the practice
- Were other stakeholders involved? What was their role in the planning and implementation process?
 - What does the LHD do to foster collaboration with community stakeholders? Describe the relationship(s) and how it furthers the practice goal(s)
- Any start up or in-kind costs and funding services associated with this practice? Please provide actual data, if possible. Otherwise, provide an estimate of start-up costs/ budget breakdown.

5000 words maximum

Enter the LHD and Community Collaboration related to your practice (5000 words maximum): *

Goal: In FY2013, the top goal and objective of the Communications Department of CDPH was to develop an Internal Communications Plan that would get results. The plan's objective was to help CDPH employees feel valued and give them the opportunity to share their opinions and to help make the organization a better place to work. The plan, which continues to be implemented and monitored for its effectiveness, consists of eight strategies which are shown below: Strategy 1: Connect CDPH Employees to the Big Picture. (Owner: Communications Director) Helping an employee to understand an organization's strategy and situation allows him/her to look and act beyond their role so they can understand why certain decisions that may affect them were made. Tactics: (Human Resources Director, Communications Director and District Health Director) • Have a "Yearly Check Up: the District Health Director will give a "State of CDPH" address once a year in July as the new fiscal year begins. This is done by video. The District Health Director will cover topics such as where the organization is in comparison to others in the state, employee survey results, employee concerns and what is being doing to address them, and how he sees the organization developing throughout the year. Transparency is key. This is also an opportunity for the District Health Director to explain what CDPH is doing internally to make sure employee's voices are heard. The yearly video will be a standing link on the CDPH Intranet and will also be included in the July Spotlight (internal) newsletter. • In addition to the "Yearly Check Up," "Quarterly Supervisors Meetings" will be held. These meetings include the District Health Director, the Director of Communications and the Human Resources Director (HR Director), along with all supervisors directly under the Leadership Team level. All attendees have prior input on the agenda. This is a good time share the overall mission, vision and goals of CDPH and to discuss information that help the supervisors connect with employees, making sure they are grasping the big picture. • Ensure that "big picture" messages are incorporated in the Spotlight newsletter. • Involve staff in Crucial Conversations and/or Good to Great Training. Strategy 2: Reward employees who go beyond the norm through recognition and appreciation to build morale. (Owner: Human Resources Director) By connecting employees and encouraging them to read about, respond to and share the organization's positive stories and good news, a 'chain reaction' of positivity can be created, resulting in employees having a sense of wellbeing from working in a positive environment and, ultimately, being engaged. Tactics: (Human Resources Director, Communications Director and Employee Enhancement Chair) • WOW cards can be given by all CDPH employees and a pre-determined number of WOW cards should not be required of each staff member, but rather they should be rewarded on merit alone. This will create more value and earning a WOW card will mean more to recipients. • Once an employee receives five WOW cards (a copy of all WOW cards should be sent to HR), they will receive a WOW pin or star pin that they can attach to their employee badge so everyone knows the positive impact they have made. Encourage positive behavior and performance by building value in the fact that the pin represents going above and beyond. The pin will turn into a symbol of excellence for the entire organization. (The pin

is in addition to the prizes received at 3, 8, 15 and 20 cards.) • Highlight ALL WOW card recipients on an ongoing basis in the Spotlight newsletter. • The Employee of the Month (EOM) program: Any District 3-1 employee can nominate a staff member via the Intranet. (No Leadership Team members are eligible.) All nominations are compiled and the EEC votes on a single winner each month. The Employee of the Year (EOY) program: One of 12 EOM recipients is selected. This is voted on by the entire CDPH staff via Survey Monkey. The voting takes place prior to Continuing Education (CE) Day where the EOY announcement is made. Both the EOM and EOY will be featured in the Spotlight Newsletter and on the digital bulletin board in the Marietta Health Center lobby. Strategy 3: Let all employees know that they matter. (Owner: Human Resources Director) Tactics: (Leadership Team, District Health Director, Human Resources Director and EEC Chair) • Engage in weekly “floor” walks. It is recommended that the District Health Director at the Marietta office and the respective Center Managers at other offices, walk the “floor” of the building they are in to say “good morning” to everyone each week. It is important to try and learn everyone’s name and specific things about each individual (where they grew up, the spouse’s name, where they went to school). This will make the District Health Director and Center Managers more approachable and help build trust. • If a member of the Leadership Team is going to another location, they will take 15 minutes to visit with everyone and tell them something positive that has happened. This helps them get to know other employees at these locations by name. If there is time, they can set up a brief meeting with everyone to share any good news and answer questions. • Members of the Leadership Team should make an effort to have lunch with employees once a quarter to interact on an informal basis and to make them more approachable. (This would be done through events such as the CDPH cookouts, chili cook-offs, etc.). • Service Awards - Service Award recipients will be awarded with a certificate at staff meetings. All service award recipients are highlighted at CE Day. High level awards such as GPHA, will also be acknowledged in Leadership Team meetings and in the Spotlight Newsletter. • Recognize all District 3-1 employees each year during Public Service Recognition Week (usually in May of each year). This will be coordinated by the Employee Enhancement Committee. Strategy 4: Make decisions transparent and, where possible, let employees have a voice in those decisions. (Owner: EEC Chair) When employees have the full context about a decision and the options considered, they are more likely to support it regardless of whether they agree with it or not. Transparency creates openness, which builds more trust between Leadership Team and the staff. Asking for their opinion also shows that you care about them. Tactics: (EEC Chair, Communications Director) • Invite employees to provide their input by reinstituting the “Suggestion Box,” but call it the “SolutionBox”. For every idea/suggestion given, the employee is required to communicate a solution. This information can be shared via the monthly Spotlight newsletter and on the Intranet, highlighting ideas/suggestions/solutions and how they are being addressed (when applicable). Let employees know that they can use the electronic survey, or they can send it by interoffice mail to the Director of Communications. Strategy 5: Collaborate on organizational goals. (Owner: Quality Management Director) A highly participative workplace yields better buy-in for decisions as people more fully support ideas they help create. Tactics: (Quality Management Director, Communications Director) • Pick one organizational goal from the CDPH Mission, Vision, Strategy map or Balanced Scorecard per quarter and remind employees of it in the Spotlight and encourage them to find ways to support it in what they do every day. (Example: “Here’s how it applies to Healthy Behaviors...”) • Quality Management Director to attend staff meetings to review Center and Program Score Cards. Check-in with staff to let them know you recognize their hard work to fulfill our Mission and Vision. • Quality Management Director to develop very succinct, easy to understand BSC PowerPoint overview for NEO, supervisor trainings, staff meetings. • Quality Management Director to pull out and feature “Program in Action” success stories from the Program Summary Tool and highlight these in the Spotlight newsletter on a quarterly basis. Strategy 6: Share the positive news. (Owner: Communications Director) When organizations only share negative news, it can bring down morale. Sharing positive news can build morale and engage employees. Tactics: (Communications Director, Human Resources Director) • Add video segments and/or articles to each newsletter, when possible, with a member of leadership sharing the good news and giving kudos to those that are responsible. Allow management to share news about specific departments this way as well, if possible so they can feel like they are part of it. • Team Lunch ‘N’ Learns, also known as “Third Thursdays,” will be held monthly. These will feature a team or individual that will be given the opportunity to highlight their program to an audience of District 3-1 staff. This would be limited to 20 people per session and lunch will be provided. These sessions will be held at the Marietta Health Center. • Highlight all employee incentives, i.e., health club discounts, ice cream socials, luncheons, health screenings, flu shots, State discounts, etc., via email, the Spotlight newsletter and/or HR News You Can Use and on a dedicated page on the CDPH Intranet. The goal is to offer a new incentive every other month and remind employees of these discounts and services. Strategy 7: Keep employees in the know. (Owner: Communications Director) Communicate regularly and determine how specific types of information should be sent. If all news is treated the same, they won’t know when it’s urgent or not and won’t know what value to place on the information. Tactics: (Communications Director) • If a major decision about CDPH has employees nervous and there is no time to meet, the District Health Director, the Communications Director, the Deputy District Health Director or another member from the Leadership Team would send a formatted email so it’s perceived as a more formal communication. Even if you don’t know the outcome, it’s best to prepare everyone. People can handle bad news; what they can’t handle, is not knowing. • Continue to send out the Spotlight Newsletter on a bi-monthly basis to keep everyone abreast of what is happening, positive and negative. Link back to the Intranet to encourage them to seek and find information there. • Instead of sending all information in an email to everyone, think of what information could be shared in the next Spotlight newsletter or next HR News You Can Use and share it with the Communications Director or the Human Resources Director so they can include it in one of the two publications. This will reduce the number of overall communications. Strategy 8: Center directors encourage program managers to involve staff on a regular basis. (Owner: Deputy District Health Director) Tactics: (Deputy District Health Director, Clinical Services Director, Director of Emergency Preparedness & Response, Director of Environmental Health and Director of Administration) • Center Directors will have monthly staff meetings to discuss what is happening in the organization and in their own center, and how any information or news will affect each team or individual. They should actively promote sharing ideas. • Center Directors will report back to the District Health Director and/or Leadership Team on how these meetings are received and what topics are discussed by submitting minutes and/or an agenda.

The timeframe for the ICS is ongoing. All the components of the strategy are becoming part of the normal day-to-day activities and are believed to continue as part of the Employee Enhancement Committee and the Office of Communication’s goals. There are no start-up or other costs associated with the ICS, although there may be some costs depending on employee rewards or ways to shown recognition which will come out of the Office of Administration’s budget.

Evaluation assesses the value of the practice and the potential worth it has to other LHDs and the populations they serve. It is also an effective means to assess the credibility of the practice. Evaluation helps public health practice maintain standards and improve practice. Two types of evaluation are **process** and **outcome**. Process evaluation assesses the effectiveness of the steps taken to achieve the desired practice outcomes. Outcome evaluation summarizes the results of the practice efforts. Results may be long-term, such as an improvement in health status, or short-term, such as an improvement in knowledge/awareness, a policy change, an increase in numbers reached, etc. Results may be quantitative (empirical data such as percentages or numerical counts) and/or qualitative (e.g., focus group results, in-depth interviews, or anecdotal evidence).

- What did you find out? To what extent were your objectives achieved? Please re-state your objectives.
- Did you evaluate your practice?
 - List any primary data sources, who collected the data, and how (if applicable)
 - List any secondary data sources used (if applicable)
 - List performance measures used. Include process and outcome measures as appropriate.
 - Describe how results were analyzed
 - Were any modifications made to the practice as a result of the data findings?

2000 Words Maximum

Please enter the evaluation results of your practice (2000 Words Maximum): *

Objective: One of the key components of the ICS was to help CDPH employees feel valued and give them the opportunity to share their opinions and to help make the organization a better place to work. After collecting data from the Employee Satisfaction survey for several years, CDPH, is able to show that the objectives of the ICS are, and continue to be achieved by showing an increase in the results of questions #11, #20, #21, #30 and #32. (Please note, the survey questions are based on a scale from 1-5, 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree.) Q11: I feel valued and appreciated for my contributions to the organization: FY2014: 3.58 FY2015: 3.82 FY2016: 3.73 Q20: In general, I'm clear about the roles and expectations of my job: FY2014: 4.15 FY2015: 4.16 FY2016: 4.14 Q21: Employees are encouraged to communicate and work together across the organization: FY2014: 3.71 FY2015: 3.84 FY2016: 3.82 Q30: Managers communicate CDPH's mission, vision and objectives: FY2014: 3.71 FY2015: 4.02 FY2016: 3.83 Q32: I am satisfied with the recognition I received for doing a good job: FY2014: 3.40 FY2015: 3.58 FY2016: 3.52 *Average of the five (5) questions: FY2014: 3.71 FY2015: 3.88 FY2016: 3.81 Evaluation Method: In June of each year, the Office of Human Resources sends an electronic survey to all employees measuring employee satisfaction for the year. The staff is given several weeks to complete the survey. Once the deadline passes, the data is pulled and shared with the Leadership Team, the supervisors and the staff, as well as many external partners.

Sustainability

Sustainability is determined by the availability of adequate resources. In addition, the practice should be designed so that the stakeholders are invested in its maintenance and to ensure it is sustained after initial development (*NACCHO acknowledges that fiscal challenges may limit the feasibility of a practice's continuation.*)

- Lessons learned in relation to practice
- Lessons learned in relation to partner collaboration (if applicable)
- Did you do a cost/benefit analysis? If so, describe.
- Is there sufficient stakeholder commitment to sustain the practice?
 - Describe sustainability plans

1500 Words Maximum

Please enter the sustainability of your practice (2000 Words Maximum): *

The CDPH Internal Communications Strategy is a practical way to promote internal communications within the staff of CDPH. The components of the strategy are easy to follow by the strategy owner which helps them remain accountable. A Gantt chart is also used to follow the success of the plan and is updated monthly by the Communications Director. Sustainability for the ICS is very high since Strategy Owners (members of the Leadership Team) are responsible for making sure each of the strategies of the plan are met.

Additional Information

How did you hear about the Model Practices Program:: *

☒ I am a previous Model Practices applicant

☐ At a Conference

☐ NACCHO Website

☐ Public Health Dispatch

☒ Colleague in my LHD

☐ Model Practices brochure

☐ NACCHO Exhibit Booth

☐ NACCHO Connect

☐ Colleague from another public health agency

☐ E-Mail from NACCHO

☐ NACCHO Exchange