

An Assessment of the Employee Wellness Program for the City of New Braunfels

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this applied research project is threefold. First, it describes the ideal components of an effective wellness program obtained from the literature. Second, it assesses the City of New Braunfels Wellness Program using the ideal type components. Third, it provides recommendations for improving the City of New Braunfels Wellness Program. The methods used in this study are semi-structured interviews with City of New Braunfels Wellness Program administrators and employees, document analysis, and direct observation.

This research will be beneficial to those looking to make changes to improve the state of their health care and claim costs, as well as improve employee morale and general well being, specifically in the public sector. This research will provide an ideal, comprehensive model of an employee wellness program as shown in the conceptual framework. It will also provide details for successful implementation practices. This research will be significant to many organizations in building a successful framework to implement, change, or update their current worksite wellness initiative by analyzing the programs that other organizations are offering and implementing into their work culture.

## **Biography**

Rebecca L. Miers completed this research in partial fulfillment for the requirement for the degree of Master of Public Administration from Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas. She is currently employed with the City of New Braunfels, Texas where she serves as the Human Resources Specialist in the Human Resources Department. Rebecca's career in municipal government began after completion of her Bachelor's degree in 2013, also from Texas State University. Rebecca has a passion for working in Human Resources and the challenges it presents, specifically in the public sector. This research was motivated by real life experiences. Rebecca feels strongly about program implementation in regards to health, and hopes that this research will assist other Human Resources professionals in re-designing and/or developing their employee wellness program.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Drawing on the works of Stephanie Garcia (2001), this research examines the contemporary literature on Employee Wellness Programs. Garcia (2001) adopted a framework from Church (1993) and used it to assess the content of employee wellness programs in Central Texas. In this paper, I will be using Garcia's model, which was updated from Church's model.<sup>1</sup> This chapter also reexamines and updates their assessment framework, which is used to evaluate the City of New Braunfels employee wellness program. This paper additionally provides an updated detailed overview of the components of a successful wellness program. These factors should help identify what they should focus on when attempting to implement or change a worksite wellness program. These guidelines should help organizations create, implement, and maintain a successful wellness program.

There are many reasons behind the importance of implementing a comprehensive worksite wellness program, including employee well being and potential cost savings. Given the important role local governments play in society, keeping those who interact with community residents in good health truly matters – not just for the organization, but also for the future of the community (Stasiuk 2013). Wellness programs in the workplace have great potential to improve employees' long-term lifestyle choices. This is importance because there are over 143 million adults working full-time and spending 8-10 hours per day in the workplace (Lankford et

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<sup>1</sup> The model used in this paper was created by Church (1993) and updated by Garcia (2001). For brevity's sake, I will refer to the model as the Garcia model.



al. 2013). These employees average eating one third of his or her meals at work (Stokes et al. 2006).

As discussed in Garcia's (2001) research, municipal employees handle a significant amount of stress in their day to day. A comprehensive wellness program is one-way employers can protect against deteriorating and reduce health care related costs. Employees are valuable assets to their organizations, and to preserve their abilities to handle situations they face, employers should ensure that mechanisms are in place for employees to turn to if situations become unbearable (Garcia, 2001).

### **Recognizing the Importance of an Employee Wellness Program**

The following scenarios illustrate examples of challenges municipal employees face on a day-to-day basis that could affect their well-being. These scenarios represent the importance of implementation of a comprehensive wellness program. Employees in all organizations face stresses that illustrate the need for a comprehensive wellness program; however, these scenarios will focus primarily on experiences municipal employees are likely to face. These scenarios are listed to further show the purpose of this study.

Scenario 1: Douglas works as the Downtown Development Coordinator and has been in the position for five years. Recently, they combined his position and the Historic Preservation Officer position and gave him a raise. Although he is grateful for the opportunity, it comes with a large amount of additional responsibilities. To keep up with the work, he is coming in early and staying late, as well as attending all required Planning Commission and Downtown Board meetings. With the extended hours, Douglas is often required to eat on the go, which are

mostly unhealthy options. Douglas knows there are probably healthy options for eating on the go, but isn't sure of them and is too tired to find out on his own. Douglas is also struggling with finding time to exercise, which combined with his poor diet over time has affected his health. Recently, he got a call at work from his doctor telling him that he is pre-diabetic. Shortly after, Douglas's boss called him in to ask about an employee complaint on a delayed construction permit for a historic structure downtown. Douglas feels caught in the middle of succeeding at his job and taking care of his health, and wishes there were resources he could use to get healthier while at work.

Scenario 2: Debra works in the Parks and Recreation Department as an Administrative Assistant. Her job requires her to wear many hats, as she reports to her director and assistant director, is the first contact for division managers for any administrative issues, and the main contact for customer calls and walk-ins. Debra arrives at work on Friday, and begins working on finalizing timesheets for that pay period for the 90 members of the Parks and Recreation staff, which is due that day to Finance. Shortly after, her director asks her to contact two employees outside the department to set up a meeting, which is urgent and needs to happen today. Just as she is about to begin setting up the meeting, a Parks Foreman walks in asking about a uniform he had recently ordered that he had been waiting on for weeks. Debra completes the Foreman's request, and then gets a call from a citizen demanding a rental in the park for that weekend, even though they are booked. She is also scheduled to work that weekend at a Parks event, so will only get one day off this week. Debra is constantly battling these types of scenarios, and feels the stress is getting to her. She has tried self-help stress techniques, but they haven't seemed to improve her anxiety or depression associated with being stressed at

work, as well as in her strained home life. Debra wishes there was a form of professional counseling she could get to assist with her work and home stressors, since she cannot afford counseling on her own.

Employers often lack the knowledge, insight, and experience needed to design, implement, and evaluate effective programs (Goetzel et al. 2007). Using the information provided in this study to implement a comprehensive wellness program allows employers to combat health concerns with their employees and work toward a healthier workforce.

### **The Research Setting**

The purpose of this section is to provide a clearer understanding of the conditions under which municipal employees perform, particularly within the research population. The research setting is in New Braunfels, Texas, specifically studying the City of New Braunfels employee wellness program. This section assists in understanding the challenges that the City of New Braunfels faces and the importance of implementing a comprehensive wellness program within the practical ideal model.

New Braunfels, Texas is a city with a population of approximately 74,000 (Google Public Data) within Comal and Guadalupe counties. New Braunfels is a principle city of the San Antonio-New Braunfels metropolitan statistical area, located between San Antonio and Austin. New Braunfels was named the second fastest growing city in the United States in 2016 (Quesada 2016). Because of its explosive growth, city officials have faced a challenge in keeping up with internal employee growth to match the influx in population and the needs of the citizens. New Braunfels growth rate at the time of the ranking was reflected in an increase in

housing throughout Comal County, which saw a 3.6 percent increase in the estimated number of housing units from 2014 to 2015 – from 51,421 to 53,248 (Quesada 2016).

**Maps 2.1 and 2.2** provide visual aids for understanding where New Braunfels is located within the state of Texas, with both maps marking New Braunfels with a red star. The City of New Braunfels currently employs approximately 607 full-time and part-time employees, growing to over 700 in the summer when hiring seasonal positions for the Parks and Recreation Department and the New Braunfels Public Library. New Braunfels is known for its attractions such as Schlitterbahn Waterpark and the Comal and Guadalupe rivers, which brings a large influx of tourists in the late Spring and Summer seasons. The approximate number of tourists that enter New Braunfels every season is estimated at 3 million. The popular 10-day festival Wurstfest and the historic area of Gruene also attract a large number of tourists to New Braunfels each year.

The City of New Braunfels operates under a Council-Manager form of government, and has seven Council Members, including the Mayor and six council districts. In a Council-Manager form of government, Council appoints a City Manager to perform the day-to-day administrative operations (National League of Cities). The City Council's function is to oversee the general administration, make policy, and set the budget (National League of Cities). Council-Manager is the most popular form of government, although some cities such as Houston still function as a Strong Mayor-Council form of government (City of Houston website). According to a survey conducted by the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) in 2006, the Council-Manager form of government had grown from 48% usage in 1996 to 55% usage in 2006 (National League of Cities).

The Council also focuses on the community's goals, major projects, community growth, land use developments, capital improvements plans, capital financing, and strategic planning (Garcia 2001). Although Council plays a large role in these processes, the City Manager is responsible for making these policy recommendations to Council with the assistance of the department directors. After the recommendations are made, the Council is responsible for making final decisions on whether to adopt the policy or modify the recommendations.

All municipalities should assess the components of their wellness program to compare to the practical idea model. These types of assessments should be implemented to evaluate possible improvements to existing wellness programs. An analysis of the City of New Braunfels Wellness Program has merit because the program has changed significantly since its last evaluation in by Garcia in 2001. Although changes have been made, an assessment was needed to evaluate these changes to see if the City of New Braunfels was meeting the components of the practical ideal model. In addition, the City of New Braunfels Wellness Program that has not recently been assessed; therefore, this paper will fill a need by doing so.

Map 2.1: Texas with New Braunfels Location



Map 2.2: The Austin-San Antonio Corridor with New Braunfels Location



## **Problem and Research Purpose**

This research used the practical ideal model to rate employee wellness programs. The purpose of this research is to use the identified practical ideal model to assess the City of New Braunfels Wellness Program. The practical ideal type is a system used to organize the ideas, and is often used to assess a public program, process, or activity. The practical ideal type provides a benchmark that enables administrators to understand and improve reality (Shields and Rangarajan 2013). At the conclusion of this research, the findings of this assessment result in recommendations to improve the City of New Braunfels Wellness Program. This research will provide a detailed overview of the components of a successful wellness program, which includes four main components. The focus of this research is partly due to the growing interest to focus on workplace disease prevention and successful wellness program implementation to control health care costs.

The second portion of this research assesses the wellness program for the City of Braunfels by gauging how closely their wellness program compares to the practical ideal type characteristics identified and developed through the literature and Garcia's study. Using document analysis, direct observation, and interviews, data in accordance with the practical ideal type characteristics is confirmed. After compiling the data obtained from these two methodologies, recommendations are made for improving the wellness program for the City of New Braunfels. Also note that the recommendations in this research are designed to specifically address proactive solutions, and do not address situations that are not considered proactive and therefore out of one's control.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

This research project is founded upon a previous study completed by Stephanie Garcia (2001). While completing her applied research project in 2001, Stephanie Garcia outlined five components of a successful wellness program, which have been combined into four categories by combining stress management into psychological and mental wellness. The first portion of this paper reviews the framework Garcia established, while linking each component to the current literature. The four components are as follows:

1. Physical Fitness
2. Psychological and Mental Health (to include Stress Management)
3. Nutrition and Dietary Related Issues
4. Alcohol and Chemical Dependency

In the following pages, detailed descriptions of these four areas of wellness are provided. The idea of wellness is an active process of becoming aware of, and making choices toward, a more successful existence. Workplace wellness is an employer-sponsored program designed to support employees as they adopt and sustain behaviors that reduce health risks, improve quality of life, enhance personal effectiveness, and benefit the organization's bottom line (Berry et al. 2010). These four areas successfully outline the description of a successful workplace wellness program and explain how this ideal can be achieved.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the literature as it relates to employee wellness programs. In addition, the framework used to evaluate the New Braunfels



wellness program is explained and justified to determine the necessary components that should be included in an ideal program. The essential components are then used to develop a practical ideal type (Shields and Rangarajan 2013). In addition, this chapter expands upon the previous research concerning wellness programs conducted by Stephanie Garcia (2001). The four main components of an employee wellness program are identified and discussed, as well as describe the purposes as well as the benefits of providing a comprehensive and well-integrated wellness program. This chapter also develops and provides the conceptual framework of the research.

Materials obtained from the literature overwhelmingly corroborate Garcia's idea of an integrated framework. The original purpose of an employee wellness program (discussed in more detail in the history of employee wellness programs section) has been far exceeded, with today's programs assisting with a wide range of issues. The literature suggests that by providing programs to assist employees and aid in health promotion, organizations can meet employee needs while trying to create a positive and productive work environment (Garcia 2001). The benefits of each component are discussed in the various sections of this chapter. These are common components of an ideal employee wellness program that are consistent in the literature. By applying these discussed components, a healthier workforce can be achieved.

When implementing a wellness program, employers should look at a variety of factors to assess their employee population's health status, such as employee medical records, health care claims and costs, workers' compensation claims, absentee rates, and any information provided by health risk appraisals (Garcia 2001). To achieve a successful wellness program, an

organization must formulate a clear set of objectives as to what the wellness program seeks to accomplish and inform their employees about their dedication to health promotion.

Another important factor to consider when developing a wellness program is employee participation. No matter how well-designed a wellness program is, it will fail if employees refuse to use it. One way to increase employee participation is to allow employees to aid in the design process. This way, employees are more likely to believe in the wellness program because they helped in its formation, and thus are more likely to use the program (Hernandez 2000). Also, organizations can acquire input from employees and measure overall interests through surveys, focus groups, interviews, e-mails, or other types of meetings (Martinez 1999). Garcia (2001) cited Arturo T. Hernandez (2000) in her research, stating that he explains the main components of an ideal wellness program described in both of their models are particularly pertinent to the public-sector employees.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (Public Law 111-148, Sec. 2705) define a wellness program as a program offered by an employer designed to promote health or prevent disease (Liu et al. 2014). The research (Berry 2010, Chen 2015, Liu 2014) indicates that the poorly designed worksite wellness programs are executed inefficiently, do not follow evidence-based practices, are not supported by their employee population, and therefore ineffective. A poorly structured program is unlikely to produce positive results within a workplace. The emergence and wide use of accreditation programs are likely to increase competition in the wellness program market and, as a result, improve program offerings. This, in turn, will increase program impacts on health outcomes and medical costs (Liu et al. 2014).

Wellness programs are a broad term that refers to an array of health management services that organizations can offer, with the research on wellness programs clearly indicating proven success. Comprehensive wellness programs include both a fitness component and an educational component such as nutrition or stress reduction classes (Parks 2008). Many organizations partially implement a wellness program, but many fail to apply all aspects for a successful program. This lack of knowledge of implementing a successful worksite wellness program brings attention to the importance of understanding the factors that make wellness programs most successful and the barriers to their wider adoption.

More than 60 percent of Americans get their health insurance coverage through an employment-based plan (Baicker and Song 2010), which is one reason why employers are focusing more on implementation of comprehensive workplace wellness programs. Health insurance will likely continue to be employment based in the United States. The evidence suggests that properly implemented employer worksite wellness programs may not only improve health, but also result in substantial savings in health care costs (Baicker and Song 2010). The reason for these high health care costs pertain partly to the state of health of employees, who suffer from various chronic diseases such as obesity, heart disease, stroke, type two diabetes, among many others. Poor employee health contributes directly to employer costs, including health care claims and decreased efficiency in workers. Although some of the problems the standard Employee Wellness Program handle are not directly related to the job, employers provide the programs because they believe healthy employees to be more productive (Garcia 2001).

## History of Employee Wellness Programs

Worksite wellness initiatives have evolved for many years. After World War II, business executives saw the value in staying fit, and several successful companies built well-appointed gymnasium facilities with fitness instructors for their top-level executives (Khoury 2014). While some companies restricted these benefits to upper management, others began extending these health services to a wider range of employees. In the 1950s and 1960s, companies such as Texas Instruments and Xerox instituted employee fitness programs (Khoury 2014). The research also explains that Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) were implemented in the 1950s were initially created to help employees with alcohol programs, but gradually expanded to address other work-life issues (Garcia 2001 and Khoury 2014).

After the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) established itself in 1970, an increased emphasis on workplace accidents and work-related illnesses emerged (Khoury 2014). Workplace health centers tended to focus on occupational health to improve employee productivity and reduce costs. In terms of workplace initiatives, corporate wellness is a relatively new concept that didn't begin developing until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, and for a relatively young industry, it has witnessed impressive growth since its inception in the 1980s (Burjek 2017). By the 1980s, a wider range of wellness programs emerged, to include stress management, nutrition, and weight management (Khoury 2014).

Comprehensive health promotion programs build upon a culture of health that supports individuals. These efforts aim at changing lifelong health habits by putting in place policies, programs, benefits, management, and environmental practices that intentionally motivate and

sustain health improvement (Goetzel et al. 2014). Improving health requires more than simply convincing employees to take better care; an organization should take all aspects of the best practices listed in the literature and use them to create a workplace wellness environment where leading a healthy lifestyle is the default option.

A survey by the International Public Management Association for Human Resources (IPMA-HR) reported that many its members have indicated an increase of 11 to 20 percent in health care costs (Benavides and Haillee 2010). Many organizations, including government organizations at all levels, are facing this harsh reality. Some employers in the U.S. are also investing in programs to improve the quality of medical care and simultaneously shifting more of the health costs to their employees without understanding the implications on the amount and type of care their employees will receive (Nicholson et al. 2005).

### **1. Physical Fitness**

Costs associated with employees who exhibit unhealthy lifestyles can be extraordinary, which is why it is so crucial to include physical fitness in the ideal, comprehensive wellness model. The factors discussed within this section contribute to an employee's ability to lead a healthy lifestyle, which in turn, leads the employee to perform more productively without as much risk for injury. Research also shows that the workplace is one of the most influential settings where health education can take place (Neville et al. 2011). These initiatives can be something as simple as fifteen-minute group stretches every day, or a group exercise class hosted at the workplace. Up to 70 percent of health care costs are the result of personal

lifestyle choices, which means a number of these conditions can be prevented or more effectively managed with the right education, support, and programs (Stasiuk 2013).

As employees take responsibility for their physical health, organizations may increasingly see discounts on Workers' Compensation claims due to a more able-bodied workforce. Physical fitness and health wellness are also attributed to decreased absenteeism, decreased recruiting and training costs, improved morale, and improved overall workplace safety (Benavides and Haillee 2010). Physical fitness initiatives specifically work to avoid illness or injury and to improve quality of work life and morale. A comprehensive wellness program not only should promote regular physical activity, but also healthy dietary habits.

Health risks and health behaviors, such as obesity and physical inactivity, are associated with both higher absenteeism and presenteeism, which refers to an employees' impaired work performance due to illness (Chen et al. 2015). Physical fitness initiatives have limitations when it comes to behavior change because their benefits may be restricted to those who are motivated to participate. In a study, Chen et al (2015) states that employees who indicated the lowest level of perceived workplace support for physical activity reported 6.9% more presenteeism than employees who indicated the highest level of perceived workplace support for physical activity. Because of these challenges, it is important to integrate physical fitness initiatives that get employees motivated and that are realistic.

### **1.1 Gym Discounts/On Site Work Out Facilities**

The range of physical fitness initiatives offered varies between organizations. For example, one city may only offer discount gym memberships while a better-funded city may

have an onsite workout facility. Worksite facilities are an important way of reaching a large percentage of the employees. Results from randomized trials of worksite health promotion are promising, yet modest. One of the reasons for a “modest” health behavior change is because already healthy employees tend to be the ones to participate. Although on-site exercising facilities are nice in that they provide an easy, convenient, and inexpensive way to exercise, it is not necessary for companies to maintain their own on-site facilities (Garcia 2001). Rather, especially for small organizations, it may be more cost-effective to create partnerships with a local fitness center. With this approach, a company can opt to pay all or a portion of employees’ memberships. No matter which route is taken, an organization should find some way to promote physical fitness among its employees.

Current evidence indicates that worksite physical activity and/or nutrition programs can result in reductions in body weight, cholesterol level, and cardiovascular disease risks (Donegan et al. 2012). Physical activity contributes to improved health and prevention of chronic diseases such as obesity, osteoporosis, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, stroke, and some cancers. The direct correlation of physical fitness and disease prevention shows the importance of successfully implementing these initiatives and maintaining participation. Usually temporary or reduced participation in a physical activity initiative is due to the initial novelty or excitement regarding the implemented activities. Proper program implementation and communication assists participation from less healthy employees.

Another alternative described by Lankford et al (2013) is offering employees flexible work schedules. This gives employees more flexibility to attend an on or off-site gym and to make fitness a priority in their routine. Lankford et al. (2013) also mentions the alternative

opportunities for employers, such as designating on site walking paths, purchasing physical activity equipment, and address sitting time and incorporate fitness breaks. There are many ways to assist in integrating physical activity into an organization's every day habits, and all are crucial in creating a comprehensive and successful wellness program.

## **1.2 Designated On-Duty Exercise Time**

Integrating physical fitness into an employee's day-to-day habits improves health in many aspects, but employees tend to report a lack of time to participate in physical activity (Stokes et al. 2006), further stressing the importance of availability of these initiatives to employees in the workplace. These types of physical fitness programs may lead to reduction in health care costs and thus health insurance premiums. Healthier employees often show to be more productive and miss fewer days of work (Baicker and Song 2010).

Designated on duty exercise time can go a long way in improving employee health. When employees are given more time to dedicate to exercise throughout their workday, they are more likely to feel encouraged and empowered to do so (Lankford et al. 2013). Proximity to equipment for the purpose is also helpful, described in section 1.1. Promoting an employee walking club during the lunch hour, sponsorship of events such as intramural sports, or allowing a one-and-a-half-hour lunch to promote gym attendance are all ways to designate on duty exercise time. This integration is also encouraged in the form of regular stretching activities throughout the workday or implementing ergonomic workstations.

Accessibility is also a key factor in developing and implementing a worksite wellness program. Convenience matters to employees, which includes access to fitness centers and/or



classes (Berry et al. 2010). It is important for organizations to be mindful of the size of their organization and employee culture, as this is a crucial part of the implementation process. There is a trend among small employers to offer wellness programs to their employees.

Although small businesses tend not to offer a full wellness program, when they do offer the full program, a higher percentage of employees participate compared with larger worksites (McPeck et al. 2009). These higher participation numbers attribute with strong management support and strong positive relationships between employees and managers. There is also a need for regular monitoring and continued implementation of the wellness program.

### **1.3 Incentives**

Stokes et al (2006) gave an example of a raffle incentive and exercise equipment grants offered to committees to promote wellness activities and to increase employee participation. A separate discussion by Goetzel et al. (2014) explained that meaningful incentives are a crucial part of motivating employees and improving their mental well-being. These incentives encourage employees and their families to participate, which assists in the overall goal of a healthy workforce. Incentives encourage employees to participate in the worksite wellness programs, which typically make them healthier with consistent participation. The bottom line is that healthy employees cost you less, meaning the investment in incentives is typically worth it.

An important factor for implementing the ideal wellness program practices into an organization is recognizing that implementation must fit the culture of workplace. Implementing any of the elements of best practice can happen at any organization, but the nature of how implementation happens must merge successfully with the organization's

culture and objectives to be successful. These programs must be attractive to employees by promoting and implementing them in the most innovative ways possible, while also making the services directly available to the employees. Assuming the organization's culture is conducive to beginning or expanding a workplace wellness program, ongoing measurement and evaluation needs to build into program design and implementation (Goetzel et al. 2014). Employers can be a part of the solution to employee health problems by being a motivating force with incentives for disease management and prevention to help prevent weight gain (Lankford et al. 2013).

Programs must achieve high degrees of participation to succeed. Providing incentives and rewards can lead to desired behavior among employees. The most effective incentives are those related to employees' health care costs, such as insurance premium discounts for completing a health risk assessment and/or participating in intervention programs. Successful initiatives need to be more than linked to other parts of the organization; it is crucial that the program reflects the organization's mission and core values to ensure it is a right fit. Designing the proper wellness intervention in a workplace requires understanding of the specific health issues relevant to the employee population, including the most frequent and costly health problems of employees (Goetzel et al. 2007). It is crucial to design a program that projects in a language that the organization understands and accepts.

A wellness program should be a natural extension of a firm's identity and aspirations. Employees want to feel as if they are making their own decisions in participating in a workplace wellness initiative, rather than their employer forcing them to participate. The workplace offers a useful setting for implementing such programs, since employees spend up to 60% of their waking hours at the worksite (Donegan et al. 2012). Some incentive based workplace wellness

programs resulted in employees' improved BMI, blood pressure, and cholesterol, further proving the importance of incentives and their direct relation to employee participation (Neville et al. 2011).

## **2. Psychological and Mental Health**

Improved health and reduced costs are important, but these are not the only benefits to consider regarding psychological and mental wellness implementation. For example, employers may be interested in improving workers' morale, or gaining a reputation in the marketplace as caring for their employees' psychological health and well-being. Even among highly motivated employees, there are some barriers to participation in a wellness program. These barriers attribute to larger social and contextual influence (Linnan et al. 2001). With the increases in workloads in the past decades, the number of employees experiencing psychological problems related to occupational stress has increased rapidly in Western countries.

Creating a supportive work environment creates the most efficient and cost-effective ways to engage employees in health risk reduction activities (Stokes et al 2006), which is directly related to employees' psychological and mental wellness. Organizations that invest in their employees' mental health often report that they are doing well as a business by stabilizing health care costs, reduced accident rates, low turnover, and high morale (Goetzel et al. 2014). The research has also found that participation in wellness programs is associated with higher job satisfaction (Parks and Steelman 2008).

Health concerns are arising from the psychological, ergonomic, and cognitive demands of work (Lowe et al. 2002). The organizational rationale for funding such psychological and

mental health programs within the overall worksite wellness program includes the belief that the management of workplace-stress will result in improved productivity (Kirk and Brown 2003). The simple implementation of a wellness program in the workplace may affect mental well-being and job satisfaction. One perspective is that employers who provide wellness programs gain the impression of caring for their employees and as a result, they enhance their employees' overall attitudes toward the organization (Parks and Steelman 2008).

## **2.1 Supportive Social and Physical Environments**

A crucial aspect in creating a successful worksite wellness program with a supportive social and physical environment is strong executive management support. Without support from management on the practices discussed, employees will be more hesitant to participate in the programs for fear of retaliation or judgment. This type of environment is not conducive to creating a supportive social and physical atmosphere. Effective programs have strong senior and middle management support and employee input when developing program goals and objectives (Goetzel et al. 2014). Having peer and social support available for employees is also important in successful implementation. One example of a supportive environment initiative is the National Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity's CEO Pledge, which asks business leaders to commit and demonstrate their commitment to physical activity in the workplace and to lead by example (Lankford et al. 2013). Wellness strategies and goals need to align with employer leadership, as well as the organization's mission and core values. When dealing with a person's psyche, it is important to pay attention to all the circumstances surrounding the person's behavior and approach the situation cautiously (Garcia 2001).

Successful implementation requires management to be supportive in the work environment and practice the healthy behaviors, rather than just telling employees how they should behave. This is achievable by engaging all levels of leadership to understand, support, and participate in wellness-related policies and programs (Lankford et al. 2013). Helping employees develop a healthy lifestyle by promoting a supportive work environment can benefit an organization's bottom line in multiple ways. Not only can an organization increase productivity, but it can also save hundreds of thousands of dollars a year by saving in escalating insurance premium costs (Benavides and Haillee 2010).

Low self-esteem and depression are common issues wellness programs address, but depression can be difficult to recognize, especially when dealing with its mild forms (Garcia 2001). If left untreated, depression can have serious effects on the employee's health and job performance. Supervisors can help employees who are depressed or feel stressed by allowing the employee to have a reduced workload or a position with less responsibility (Cohen 2001). Employees typically appreciate when management care enough to ask how he or she is doing, and as a result, employees will become more loyal to the organization.

One important advantage to addressing health in the workplace is allowing access in a controlled environment through existing channels of communications and social support networks (Neville et al. 2011). Research shows that creating a culture of health takes passionate, persistent, and persuasive leadership (Berry et al. 2010). If the CEO of a company participates in an employer sponsored afternoon wellness class, for example, employees will generally feel more confident in the program itself. By shaping mini cultures in the workplace, upper management can support employees' wellness efforts, making it a supportive

environment. The best wellness managers connect their expertise to the culture and strategy of the organization (Berry et al. 2010).

## **2.2 Stress Management Initiatives**

Stress in the workplace can affect productivity and reduce morale very quickly, which is why it is important to assist employees by providing stress management techniques and training. Stress management is a major component of the psychological and mental health portion of a wellness program, including both functional and dysfunctional levels of stress. Functional levels are those in which an employee can still operate productively, while dysfunctional levels usually result in a decrease of employee productivity. Dysfunctional stress is the type that wellness programs seek to resolve. Stress management is an imperative component because it helps employees cope with the effects of stress (Garcia 2001), which can greatly affect their psychological and mental health. Steve Burd, the CEO at Safeway, Inc., experienced a double-digit decline in employee health costs after signing up workers for a plan that stressed prevention and offered incentives for employees to live healthier (Goodman 2008). Job design, job efforts and rewards, family-friendly management practices, organizational change, and job security can also have major stress-related health implications for workers.

According to the American Institute of Stress, organizations lose roughly \$300 billion dollars a year because of absenteeism, turnover, workplace stress, and health care costs (Parks and Steelman 2008). These high costs are the reality of what employers and organizations are facing and actively seeking to control, which is why many organizations are

seeking to mitigate problems before they emerge or become unmanageable. The right wellness program can create a positive return on funds invested by an organization, and can empower employees to make healthy lifestyle choices. By following the guidelines for implementing the best wellness practices, an organization can work to successfully limit costs and improve the long-term mental health of their employee.

Stokes et al. (2006) mentions required supervisor training on conflict resolution and stress reduction as a recommendation for wellness program success. In implementing a comprehensive wellness program, it is crucial for management to play a role in employee stress management and reduction. Hopeful program outcomes described by Goetzel et al. (2014) center around improvements in the health and well-being of workers, an improved quality of life, a more engaged and motivated workforce, increased worker retention and attraction, and a healthier company culture. In a study by Terry et al. (2008), about half of the respondent companies reported offering at least one program related to stress management.

### **2.3 Employee Assistance Program/Counseling**

An Employee Assistance Program EAP is a reactive program designed to mitigate existing negative circumstances by addressing core problems as they affect an employee's productivity. Overall, studies have shown that EAPs are now an integral part of an organization's benefit package and have proved to be cost effective (Benavides and Haillee 2010). EAPs offer a range of services, such as personal, financial, and legal counseling, usually at no cost to the employee. These services are crucial to employee psychological and mental wellness because they work to identify and resolve the problems of the employee that affect or

may affect their work performance (Soeker et al. 2016). These services provided by the EAP are typically confidential and are at no risk for the employee to use.

According to a study by Held (2016), 88.1% of those that offer mental health/substance abuse benefits offer an EAP. These programs can help employees to overcome the distresses they encounter in their lives. An EAP contributes to employee working performance, which gets affected by the issues they are experiencing (Soeker et al. 2016). Significant improvements in performance occur by utilizing an EAP and other forms of counseling. These significant improvements include reduction in absenteeism, grievances, disciplinary actions, work accidents, staff turnover, tardiness, improved employee health, reduced health care costs, and improved morale (Benavides and Haillee 2010). This piece of the wellness program implementation provides a sustainable way to improve the mental well being of employees, which is crucial in keeping a positive work culture.

Within government benefit packages, EAP services are typically included. Government benefit packages are traditionally competitive (Roberts 2004). A study by Roberts (2004) shows that systematic and targeted improvements in mental health benefits will enhance public employee work-life balance and provide long-term benefits. Healthy employees tend to stay with the organization they are with (Berry et al. 2010), and mental health is a crucial component of overall wellbeing. An EAP helps to identify the worker's problems, setting goals, facilitating role performance, and enhancing behavioral functioning (Soeker 2016).



### 3. Nutrition and Diet

According to the most recent data from [stateofobesity.org](http://stateofobesity.org), the organization estimates that three-fourths of the American population will likely be overweight or obese by 2020. Individuals with obesity, diabetes, and related disorders generate significantly higher health care costs, reiterating the importance of implementation as well as employee participation in nutrition and diet. Some of the costs associated with obesity potentially pass along to employees in the form of lower wages and/or high insurance premiums, which are what employers try to prevent by implementing the proper nutrition wellness initiatives. Recognizing the adverse impact of obesity on employee productivity and health, many businesses have invested resources in worksite strategies to increase physical activity and improve the diets of their employees (Lankford et al. 2013).

Proactive solutions such as wellness programs to help address the growing health care crisis affecting our nation's workforce and population are widely needed. The research regarding personal health wellness supports the general assumptions of employees who participate in wellness efforts are healthier and thus less likely to incur sickness-related absences. Obesity is a risk factor for many chronic conditions: diabetes, heart disease, and cancer, and is known to be related to increase injuries and health care costs (Lankford et al. 2013) which reiterates the importance of balanced nutrition and diet. Motivating employees to participate in nutrition and diet initiatives provides benefits to the employer in the form of obesity prevention, risk reduction, risk avoidance, reduced health care costs, and improved productivity measures (Lankford et al. 2013). Overall health of the workforce directly relates to the health of the bottom line.

Poor health and its negative impact on productive capacity of people are causing the escalating cost burden on employers. Progressive employers are showing the way to controlling health care costs by investing in their most valuable asset – their employees. This investment begins by implementing nutrition and diet information promotion as a key tool of an organization’s worksite wellness program. Comprehensive programs with personal health initiatives such as preventative screenings and health education show to lower total health-related costs. Organizations who address nutrition and dietary issues may use education programs to help employees understand the importance of weight loss, smoking cessation, proper diet, exercise, and illness detection (Atkinson 2000). Understanding these issues are ways in which an employee can take a proactive approach to prevent from acquiring a destiny that is filled with illness and disease (Garcia 2001).

Lowe et al. (2002) measured the levels at which employees considered a workplace “healthy”, with respondents reporting their workplace to be safer than being healthy. Employers have a greater focus on safety and injury prevention, partly due to federal regulation and a lack of attention on creating conditions that support an environment of employee health and well being. Ways to integrate healthy diet into the workplace also include providing healthy food options versus your typical vending machine choices, or if that is not possible, providing a community fruit basket in the break room.

Without intervention, the costs of obesity among full-time employees will likely continue to rise; these increases will adversely affect the employer and all employees, as many organizations will pass along the costs into higher employee premiums, or opting to not offer insurance to employees. Employers that contribute to a healthier workforce have the potential

to reduce their out-of-pocket health care costs and improve productivity within their workforce (Lankford et al. 2013).

### **3.1 Nutrition/Diet Education and Training**

The general goal of implementing nutrition and diet education is to keep healthy people healthy, and to give those with health issues opportunities to improve their overall health status. Employers offer these in variety of formats, including bringing a dietitian on site to discuss dietary questions with employees. Another example is to host a healthy cooking demonstration to teach seasonal, healthy cooking techniques. In the fight to reduce obesity and health costs among adults, health education in the worksite wellness programs has proven to be effective (Neville et al. 2011). The worksite is an effective setting to communicate health information, as well as provide social support. Providing proper resources to employees is another form of health education.

By investing in an integrated nutrition and diet education program, employers can decrease their total health-related costs as well as absenteeism and presenteeism (Steultjens et al. 2012). The costs associated with employee absenteeism, presenteeism due to poor health is on average two to three times more than the medical, and pharmacy costs alone (Loeppke 2008). Among employers, the cost of medical expenses and absenteeism increase as employees become more obese. Halting this trend over the next few decades by maintaining (vs. increasing) current prevalence of obesity could potentially save billions in medical care expenditures related to obesity (Lankford et al. 2013).

Much of an employer's health care expenses relate to diagnosing and treating disease (Michaels et al. 2013). Worksite health education, specifically nutrition and diet information, is crucial to the model of a successful wellness program because this education can assist in preventing disease from occurring in the first place. There is increased prevalence of obesity and obesity-related disease among the U.S. population, and research shows that there are direct financial consequences associated with obesity (Finkelstein et al. 2005).

It is important to focus on preventative care and nutrition and diet education so that employers can provide affordable health care to employees. In addition to rising medical expenditures, obese employees are absent from work more often than their non-obese counterparts (Finkelstein et al. 2005). The results of the study conducted by Finkelstein et al. (2005) suggested that obese male employees miss up to 2.7 more days per year than normal weight males, and obese female employees miss up to 5.1 more days per year than normal-weight females.

### **3.2 Behavior Modification/Support Groups**

Preventative screenings play a major role in the best practices model for worksite wellness and can greatly assist in behavior modification. The chronic conditions that these screenings detect are largely preventable, yet they are responsible for more than half of all deaths in the world (Loeppke 2008). Primary prevention (health promotion), and tertiary prevention (early treatment/intervention) are good for individuals and organization. These can be integrated by properly by implementing preventative screenings in the workplace.

One of the most common screening methods is the health risk assessment (HRA), which includes the assessment of personal health habits and risk factors, estimation of future risk of adverse health outcomes, and feedback in the form of education and counseling to alter risk factors (Cancelliere et al. 2011). This type of assessment gives employees instantaneous health feedback to encourage them to seek any suggested medical attention based on the results. Activity and interest in the worksite health promotion and prevention fields continue to gain popularity (Chapman 2005). With rising health care costs, employers are attempting to increase the demand for health prevention in the form of various onsite preventative screenings.

The city of Mesa, Arizona realized a return of \$3.60 for every dollar invested in the health of city employees after implementing a comprehensive wellness program built on best wellness practices (Benavides and Haillee 2010). After implementing their HealthPlus program, which provides blood and bone density screenings, health risk assessments, a smoking cessation program, weight management program, and healthy living seminars, the city of Austin saw a decline in sick time used (Benavides and Haillee 2010). These examples are some of many shown in the literature that if a wellness program executes properly it can enhance employee awareness and reduce health care costs for organizations. Other than lowering health care costs, a properly implemented worksite wellness program can also improve employees' productivity and create a sense of community (Merrill et al. 2011).

Implementing policies that support a positive work-life balance such as Weight Watchers at Work or Eat Smart Move More Weigh Less are crucial in developing workplace support groups (Lankford et al. 2013). These groups add comfortableness to participating in

wellness programs in the work place and make employees more likely to succeed in their health improvement efforts. Group support is available online if not available in person.

#### **4. Alcohol and Chemical Dependency**

According to [samhsa.gov](http://samhsa.gov), alcohol and chemical dependency negatively effects organizations through lost productivity, increase of workplace accidents and injuries, employee absenteeism, low morale, and increased illness. Organizations are beginning to articulate the impact of depression, alcohol and prescription drug abuse, anxiety and sleep deprivation on their workforces, although the impact is difficult to measure (Held 2016). Alcohol and chemical dependency are crucial within the examination of a comprehensive workplace wellness program because substance abuse is a major problem in our current society. According to [sapaa.com](http://sapaa.com) (Working Partners for an Alcohol and Drug Free Workplace), an estimated 19.9 million Americans were current illicit drug users. According to a Quest Diagnostics review of 10 million test results logged in 2016, illicit drug use by American workers is climbing fast, which has led to a 12 year high in positive workplace drug tests (DiLorenzo 2017).

According to a study by Held (2016), 40.1% of survey respondents that offer mental health/substance abuse benefits offer a wellness program with a substance abuse component. Responding organizations on the study (Held 2016) offer a variety of return-to-work programs that ease the transition back into work duties. These statistics support the need for employers to include alcohol and chemical dependency within its wellness program and to see it as a crucial part of the comprehensive program. According to Held (2016), their studied concluded

that over nine in ten survey respondents (93.4%) offer some sort of mental health/substance abuse benefits.

The workplace is an important and ideal setting for health promotion interventions (Donegan et al. 2012), to include the promotion and familiarity with alcohol and chemical dependency treatment and training for staff. Managing alcohol and substance abuse in the workplace needs to occur to manage risk and potential higher medical costs. These findings overwhelmingly offer support for an employer's need to include alcohol and chemical dependency within its wellness programs. A person under the influence of drugs or alcohol not only poses a safety threat to him or herself, but also threatens the safety of others. From this perspective, the person is a serious threat to the employer and coworkers as well.

#### **4.1 Alcohol and Chemical Dependency Treatment and Training for Management**

Steultjens et al. (2012) describes improving supervisor/manager knowledge regarding mental health and possible substance abuse to be a common successful program attribute. Sufficient training for organizational leadership is crucial in identifying employees who are under the influence of any type of substance. Supervisors should be trained to recognize signs of employees who are under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs. Early detection of substance abuse problems is key, but early detection is not always possible because employees with early and middle stage substance or alcohol problems may not display a significant decline in work performance (Garcia 2001). This means substance abuse problems may not be detected until later stages, thus making it more difficult for a supervisor to motivate an employee to seek the proper treatment. This is particularly sensitive from a Department of Transportation (DOT)

standards viewpoint, which has certain protocols in place for drivers with a Commercial Driver's License (CDL), including but not limited to random drug testing for abuse identification when operating a vehicle. Identifying is not always an easy procedure, since some employees on the job could be considered "functioning alcoholics" and still able to perform their job duties.

If a manager or supervisor can identify a substance abuse issue with an employee, an EAP can be particularly helpful. The EAP can aid in the form of counseling, drug and alcohol rehab facilities, and mentorship. EAPs also provide literature to the employer to distribute discussing ways to prevent alcohol and substance abuse and how to reach out for help if needed. No matter the approach taken within an organization for intervention and prevention of these occurrences, it is essential for the company to preserve employee confidentiality (Cohen 2001).

It is also crucial for the supervisors and managers to be aware of the organization's policy on alcohol and chemical dependency should they have to handle it on site at the workplace. The policy needs to be clear, available to employees, frequently communicated and uniformly enforced regardless of rank or position. Some organizations have a "no second chance" policy, which leads to immediate termination if an employee tests positive for alcohol or chemical substance while at work. This can be increasingly sensitive if the employee is operating a vehicle or other piece of heavy equipment. This a crucial piece to the wellness program because it is such a common issue among people that can lead to reduction of productivity, safety, and morale, and to prevent an employee termination, employers should seek to be proactive in preventing alcohol and chemical abuse in their employees by utilizing resources within their wellness program.



## **Stephanie Garcia Findings**

Garcia used the conceptual framework outlined in the above sections to gauge how successfully wellness programs among multiple municipalities and compare them to the practical ideal type. In her applied research project, Garcia studied wellness programs for twenty-five municipalities within the Austin-San Antonio Corridor. Garcia used a survey as her primary research method, which held a primary purpose of assessing the wellness programs employed by municipalities within the Austin-San Antonio Corridor Council (Garcia 2001). The questions within the survey were designed to provide an overview of the services offered within these municipalities.

Surveys were mailed to Human Resources officers of municipalities within the Austin-San Antonio Corridor Council, with a total of twenty-five cities. Of the twenty-five municipalities, nineteen returned the survey within two weeks without contact from Garcia. Of the nineteen municipalities that returned the survey, only two (the City of San Marcos and the City of Seguin) returned the requested documentation needed to complete the content analysis portion of her project. The response rate for the survey portion of Garcia's research was seventy-six percent. For the content analysis portion, the response rate was eight percent. Garcia's research revealed that many municipalities do not have many of the components outlined her practical ideal type. At the time of her research, less than one-half of the municipalities who responded to the survey answered "yes" to having a wellness program for their city employees. At the time of Garcia's research, wellness programs were a relatively new practice for smaller cities, such as the ones used in her project.

Regarding physical fitness, none of the municipalities that responded to the survey provided a mandatory physical fitness program, and almost one-half provided voluntary physical fitness programs at the time of this survey. One-quarter of the cities offered incentives to physical fitness, less than one in ten provided on-duty time to exercise, and one-fifth provided workout facilities for their employees. For stress management, one-quarter of the responding municipalities taught stress management for all employees, while a majority provided supervisors with training to assist subordinates. Almost forty percent reported attempting to protect employees from stress before it occurs and attempt to control stress from supervisors and administration/management. Only one-third of the responding municipalities reported feeling that stress is sufficiently addressed.

Almost three-quarters of the municipalities who responded said that their city utilizes pre-employment psychological testing, while none of them employ post-employment psychological testing. Only one-third said that their city requires psychological or mental health testing on an as needed basis. More than one-third reported providing supervisors with training to assist in recognizing signs of psychological or mental distress, while less than half felt that the psychological or mental health needs of employees within the city are being met. In addition, less than one-fifth provide follow-up psychological or mental health tests for at-risk employees, almost all of them protected employee confidentiality for those who seek psychological or mental health care, more than three-quarters said seeking help for psychological or mental health problems would not harm an employee's career, and the majority said that employees are encouraged to seek voluntary help.

For nutrition and dietary issues, only thirty-seven percent of the municipalities said they provided nutrition/diet education to employees, while only one-third provide training on the importance of a healthy diet. Only one-fourth reported providing behavior modification classes or programs to assist in nutrition and diet control. For alcohol and chemical dependency, almost all responding municipalities said that their city provided alcohol dependency treatment for employees, almost three-quarters provide chemical dependency treatment for employees, more than half provide supervisors with training to recognize substance abuse in their subordinates, and a majority said the current substance abuse program meets the needs of the employee.

Sixty-percent of the respondents to Garcia's survey encourage employees to seek voluntary help, almost three-fourths said employees are not subject to disciplinary action for receiving assistance for substance abuse, more than three-quarters protect the confidentiality of employees who seek alcohol or chemical dependency treatment, seventy-four percent said an employee's career would not be harmed for seeking help for alcohol or chemical dependency, and most municipalities said the city provides for the comprehensive needs of employees with the current level of service.

Garcia's recommendations for improvement included the need for more comprehensive wellness programs for municipalities. At the time of her research, limited cities provided crucial components of a successful employee wellness program. Garcia also indicated the need for more physical fitness programs, workout facilities and incentives available to employees. For stress management, Garcia suggested personality profiles to identify causes of stress and an effort to control other forms of stress, such as supervisors and administration. Garcia made the

recommendation to include more training for supervisors to recognize warning signs in regards to psychological and mental health. Nutrition and diet recommendations included additional training and education, as well as behavior modification courses. Alcohol and chemical dependency components of programs showed a need for more training on the subject, as well as ensuring an EAP is not perceived as a substitute for education regarding prevention of substance abuse or alcohol abuse among employees.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Although not an exhaustive list, **Table 3.1** provides the most consistent and effective practices found in a successful, comprehensive employee wellness program as discussed in the previous sections. Implementing all factors of wellness as listed in the framework results in improvements in fitness, percentage body fat, overall feelings of well-being, and the decrease of many health risk factors (Benavides and Haillee 2010). The literature consistently describes comprehensive wellness programs as the most successful.

<b>Table 3.1: Conceptual Framework</b>	
<b>Title: An Assessment of the Employee Wellness Program for the City of New Braunfels</b>	
<b>Purpose: The purpose of this applied research project is threefold. First, it describes the ideal components of an effective wellness program obtained from the literature. Second, it assesses the City of New Braunfels Wellness Program using the ideal type components. Third, it provides recommendations for improving the City of New Braunfels Wellness Program.</b>	
<b>Category and Ideal Type Component</b>	<b>Supporting Literature</b>
1. Physical Fitness 1.1 Gym Discounts/On Site Workout Facilities 1.2 Designated On-Duty Exercise Time 1.3 Incentives	<i>(Stokes et al. 2006), (Goetzel et al. 2014), (Kirk and Brown 2003), (Baicker and Song 2010), (Benavides and Haillee 2010), (Goetzel et al. 2007), (Berry et al. 2010), (Terry et al. 2008), (McPeck et al. 2009), (Donegan et al. 2012), (Linnan et al. 2008), (Chapman 2002), (Chapman 2004) (Garcia 2001), (Stasiuk 2013), (Neville et al. 2011), (Chen et al. 2015), (Garcia 2001), (Lankford et al. 2013), (Church 1993)</i>
2. Psychological and Mental Wellness 2.1 Supportive Social and Physical Environments 2.2 Stress Management Initiatives 2.3 Employee Assistance Program/Counseling	<i>(Stokes et al. 2006), (Goetzel et al. 2014) (Kirk and Brown 2003), (Baicker and Song 2010), (Benavides and Haillee 2010), (Neville et al. 2011), (Goetzel et al. 2007), (Berry et al. 2010), (Terry et al. 2008), (Steultjens et al. 2012), (Burjek 2017), (Goodman 2008), (McPeck et al. 2009), (Klink 2001), (Chapman 2002), (Chapman 2004), (Garcia 2001), (Soeker et al. 2016), (Parks and Steelman 2008), (Lowe et al. 2002), (Linnan et al. 2001), (Lankford et al. 2013), (Cohen 2001), (Roberts 2004), (Held 2016), (Church 1993)</i>
3. Nutrition and Diet 3.1 Nutrition/Diet Education and Training 3.2 Behavior Modification/Support Groups	<i>(Stokes et al. 2006), (Goetzel et al. 2014) (Kirk and Brown 2003), (Baicker and Song 2010), (Benavides and Haillee 2010), (Burjek 2017) (Goetzel et al. 2007), (Terry et al. 2008), (Loeppke 2008), (Steultjens et al. 2012), (Goodman 2008), (McPeck et al. 2009), (Donegan et al. 2012), (Linnan et al. 2008), (Finkelstein et al. 2005), (Chapman 2002), (Garcia 2001), (Lankford et al. 2013), (Atkinson 2000), (Lowe et al. 2002), (Neville et al. 2011), (Michaels et al. 2013), (Cancelliere et al. 2011), (Merrill et al. 2011), (Church 1993)</i>

4. Alcohol and Chemical Dependency	<i>(Steultjens et al. 2012), (Donegan et al. 2012), (Garcia 2001),</i>
4.1 Alcohol/Chemical Dependency Treatment and Training for Management	<i>(Soeker 2016), (Held 2016), (DiLorenzo 2017), (Cohen 2001),</i>
	<i>(Church 1993)</i>

### **Summary of Literature Review**

As explained in the supporting literature shown in the conceptual framework, these categories and subcategories reflect reoccurring successful practices within programs that have in various workplace settings proven to have a positive effect on employee health, as well as improved claims costs for organizations. To implement a successful wellness program and create a culture of wellness, employers must use the practices described in the conceptual framework. Reviewing the literature and examining the previous research conducted by Garcia has provided a comprehensive understanding of the essential components that should be integrated into a successful employee wellness program. Additionally, the literature and previous research have helped with the development of a conceptual framework for assessing wellness programs by comparing them to the practical ideal type. In the following chapter, the research methodology is described. This section of the research is crucial to understanding the methods of research and how the data was obtained.

## Chapter 3

### Research Methodology

#### Chapter Summary

This chapter discusses the methods utilized to assess the City of New Braunfels Wellness program. This research project explains how the data is connected to the practical ideal model to evaluate the program, and makes recommendations to the City of New Braunfels for improvement. The practical ideal model is designed to make sense of an administrative process. The practical ideal framework uses the literature to justify a “practical ideal” category and considers the set of activities (or processes) that come together to produce a policy or program (Shields and Rangarajan 2013). Because this study focuses on an individual city, it uses the case study methodology, which in this instance uses interview questions, document analysis, and direct observation. This chapter discusses the application of these modes of data collection (interviews, document analysis, and direct observation), explains how the practical ideal model is operationalized and examines the sampling techniques for the documents, interviews, direct observations, and explains how the study is consistent with ethical practices for human subjects.

#### Operationalizing the Conceptual Framework

**Table 4.1** operationalizes the conceptual framework. It does this by connecting the data and the interview questions and document reviews to the individual category of the ideal model of an Employee Wellness Program. Operationalizing the methods for the conceptual framework is used to link the practical ideal type categories to the data collection methods.

**Table 4.1** indicates how the conceptual framework is linked to the interview questions, document analysis, and direct observation. The tables describe how the interview questions are operationalized in relation to the concepts found within the practical ideal type categories. Each of the wellness program components listed in the tables are like those found in the interview questions.



<b>Table 4.1 Operationalization of the Conceptual Framework</b>	
<b>Title: An Assessment of the Employee Wellness Program for the City of New Braunfels</b>	
<b>Purpose: The purpose of this applied research project is threefold. First, it describes the ideal components of an effective wellness program obtained from the literature. Second, it assesses the City of New Braunfels Wellness Program using the ideal type components. Third, it provides recommendations for improving the City of New Braunfels Wellness Program.</b>	
<b>1. Physical Fitness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>SSI 1)</b> In what ways does the City of New Braunfels' Wellness Program have a focus on physical fitness?</li> </ul>
<b>1.1 Gym Discounts/On Site Workout Facilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>SSI 2)</b> What is your experience with discounted gym rates that are offered to employees and what is your experience with onsite workout facilities?</li> <li>• <b>DA**:</b> City of New Braunfels Fitness Center Discount Memo</li> <li>• <b>DA:</b> Benefit Guidebook</li> <li>• <b>DO***:</b> Direct observation of the Police Department on site workout facility</li> </ul>
<b>1.2 Designated On-Duty Exercise Time</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>SSI 3)</b> What efforts does the City of New Braunfels make to offer designated on-duty exercise time?</li> <li>• <b>DA:</b> City of New Braunfels Employee Handbook</li> </ul>
<b>1.3 Incentives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>SSI 4)</b> What kind of incentives does the City of New Braunfels use to enhance employee participation in their Wellness Program?</li> </ul>
<b>2. Psychological and Mental Wellness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>SSI 5)</b> In your experience, how does the City of New Braunfels' Wellness Program work to implement psychological and mental wellness initiatives?</li> </ul>
<b>2.1 Supportive Social and Physical Environments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>SSI 6)</b> In your experience, does the City of New Braunfels offer ways to sustain a supportive social and physical environment in relation to mental wellness?</li> </ul>
<b>2.2 Stress Management Initiatives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>SSI 7)</b> In your experience, what types of stress management assistance does the City of New Braunfels offer in the form of training and literature?</li> </ul>
<b>2.3 Employee Assistance Program/Counseling</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>SSI 8)</b> To your knowledge, what type of Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and other counseling services does the City of New Braunfels offer?</li> <li>• <b>DA:</b> City of New Braunfels Employee Assistance Program Brochure</li> <li>• <b>DA:</b> Benefit Guidebook</li> </ul>
<b>3. Nutrition and Diet</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>SSI 9)</b> In your opinion, in what way does the City of New Braunfels have a focus on healthy nutrition and diet habits for employees?</li> </ul>
<b>3.1 Nutrition/Diet Education and Training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>SSI 10)</b> What types of trainings have you participated in from internal or external sources regarding healthy nutrition and diet?</li> <li>• <b>DO:</b> Direct observation of an employee healthy cooking class</li> </ul>

<b>3.2 Behavior Modification/Support Groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>SSI 11)</b> To your knowledge, what type of behavior modification assistance or support groups (Weight Watchers at Work, Naturally Slim, etc) for unhealthy habits does the City of New Braunfels provide?</li> </ul>
<b>4. Alcohol and Chemical Dependency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>SSI 12)</b> To your knowledge, what type of policy does the organization have in place to handle alcohol and chemical dependency issues with employees?</li> <li>• <b>DA:</b> Alcohol and Chemical Dependency section of the City of New Braunfels Employee Handbook</li> </ul>
<b>4.1 Alcohol/Chemical Dependency Treatment and Training for Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>SSI 13)</b> To your knowledge, what kind of alcohol and chemical dependency assistance does the City of New Braunfels offer to employees?</li> <li>• <b>SSI 14)</b> If applicable, what type of training does the City of New Braunfels offer management to prepare for situations with employee alcohol and chemical dependency?</li> </ul>

\*SSI: Semi-Structured Interview

\*\*DA: Document Analysis

\*\*\*DO: Direct Observation

## Case Study

This study uses a case study methodology. A case study is the most appropriate research method because of its in-depth and comprehensive approach at describing a certain location's situation and potential shortfalls. The case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events. This research can also provide a basis for future research on municipal employee wellness program implementation. There are many advantages to a case study, such as direct observation of events, as well as direct interviews with subjects closely involved with the program being studied. One analysis of case study methods found that those case studies using multiple sources of evidence were rated more highly, in terms of their overall quality, than those that relied on only single sources of information (Yin 2009). The City of New Braunfels City Manager, Robert Camareno, approved this case study research, provided by the approval letter is in **Appendix A**.

Case studies are described as an in-depth investigation of a single person, group, event, or community (McLeod 2008). Using a case study allowed the researcher to investigate the City of New Braunfels wellness program in far more detail than might be possible when attempting to deal with many research participants. While the case study is not itself a research method, the researcher has selected methods of data collection and analysis that will generate material suitable for a case study. Recommendations flow easily from the practical ideal type case study because when a practice falls short of the ideal, moving closer to the ideal should improve it (Shields and Whetsell 2017).

The tools for the case study in this research include interviews, document analysis, and direct observation of wellness initiatives within the City of New Braunfels. The interviews used in this research are semi-structured, and will be conducted with City of New Braunfels employees who may or may not have participated in the employee wellness program. The document analysis involves documents provided directly or indirectly through the Human Resources Department to employees to educate employees on various aspects of the current employee wellness program. The direct observation includes classes and other opportunities provided to employees in relation to the employee wellness programs, including observation of on-site workout facilities.

In addition to interviews, document analysis will also be used to analyze documents used to promote the City of New Braunfels Employee Wellness Program. The documents that will be reviewed in this process include the Employee Fitness Center Discount Memo, the Benefit Guidebook, Nutritional Documentation provided by Dietitians, the Employee Assistance

Program (Deer Oaks) brochure, as well as the Alcohol and Chemical Dependency section of the Employee Handbook.

### **Research Techniques**

The research techniques used in this research use an approach of triangulation, which is the rationale for using multiple sources of evidence (Yin 2009). A major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence. The data used in this research has been triangulated by the facts of the case study being supported by more than a single source of evidence (Yin 2009). The multiple sources used are semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and direct observation. The multiple sources of evidence provide multiple measures of the same phenomenon. Without such multiple sources, an invaluable advantage of the case study strategy will have been lost (Yin 2009).

### **Semi-Structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were utilized in collecting data for this research. Each category of the Employee Wellness Program includes various questions outlined in the Operationalization Table, and all questions included for both program administrators and employees were open-ended. The content of these questions is typical of qualitative field research, which will result in a more natural and unstructured conversation. Qualitative interview questions are unstructured, and the exchange and flow of the interview allows for a more flexible environment (Babbie 2014). These semi-structured interviews with the Employee Wellness Program administrators and the City of New Braunfels employees provided an opportunity to obtain qualitative findings to provide comparisons to the literature.

All interview questions included in this research are open-ended and will result in a more flexible and unstructured exchange, typical of qualitative research. The difference in the structure of the questions pertains to the type of communication between the researcher and the respondent (Babbie 2014). The interview research method gives access to individuals who have first-hand knowledge of the subject and are within the environment of which the information is located. Disadvantages to the interview research method include response bias and inaccuracies due to lack of information. A semi-structured interview also allows the ability to focus on certain topics, specifically the current components of the City of New Braunfels employee wellness program.

This research is a practical ideal type, which uses gauging. Gauging research focuses on management processes and asks, "*What should?*" be done to improve an administrative process (Shields and Whetsell 2017). This is appropriate in this research because we are seeking to examine and provide possible improvements for the City of New Braunfels employee wellness program. The practical ideal type conceptual framework has a distinct advantage over "best" practices because it is a kind of an organic, literature informed, synthesis of best practices (Shields and Tajalli 2017). The practical ideal type is a theoretical tool designed to make sense of an administrative process (Shields and Rangarajan 2013). If an organization's practice falls short of the ideal, moving closer to the ideal should result in improvement (Shields and Rangarajan 2013). This is appropriately outlined in this research when examining the City of New Braunfels wellness program.

## **Document Analysis**

One of the key advantages in conducting documentary research is the accessibility to information that would potentially be difficult to obtain using another method. This research technique is relevant due to the multiple sources of documentation available to employees in regards to various aspects of the City of New Braunfels Wellness Program. The strengths of using document analysis in this research are the ability to receive details in writing of the wellness program and its specific components. This allows for reference of specific components and evidence of their elements. Further advantages of using documents in research include the low cost of obtaining the documents, particularly when they are easily assessable. This also provides a detailed reference of the wellness literature employees receive. Many of the documents are good quality and provide a large amount of detail. The weaknesses to document analysis include the possibility of subjective data and potentially time consuming to obtain all documents needed for the research, depending on the method required to obtain the documents.

## **Direct Observation**

The advantage to using direct observation includes access to situations and people in real life situations and strong validity. In this research, I observed the on site Police Department workout facility and a nutrition education cooking class. In these observations, I was able to witness the types of amenities and courses offered to employees first hand. Observations can be made in real life situations, allowing the researcher to access the context and meaning surrounding what the observation includes. There is strong relevance of direct observation in this research, as there are multiple wellness opportunities through the City of New Braunfels

Wellness Program that are only available in person. A disadvantage to this research technique is the possible effect the researcher has on the individuals being observed in these scenarios.

Another possible disadvantage is the possibility of the researcher being perceived as too subjective, as well as the possibility of direct observation to be time consuming.

### **Sampling Information**

Originally, three members of the City of New Braunfels staff who take part in administering the Employee Wellness Program were selected for interviews, as well as fourteen City of New Braunfels staff members from all city departments. Due to a delay in the response of the researcher's IRB application, that number was reduced to one employee who takes part in administering the employee wellness program and six City of New Braunfels employees. The occupational classifications of these workers were: two in protective service occupations, one in a field work occupation, one in a management occupation, two in an office and administrative support occupation, and one in a management occupation. This was not a representative example of the employee population.

These interviews took place in the fall of 2017 at the City of New Braunfels City Hall building. The interviews took approximately 30 minutes. The approach to selecting respondents was dependent upon a selection of employees made by the Human Resources Department. In the process of selecting employees for interview, the process was that if the selected employee declines participation, the Human Resources Department provided an alternative employee to contact for possible interview and inclusion. In this research, none of the employees who were asked to participate declined participation.

The interview style research outlined involved face-to-face interviews with human subjects; therefore, are potential risks that need to be addressed. Throughout this interview, it was possible that unsatisfied or negative comments from employees could be revealed pertaining to the current Employee Wellness Program. To avoid any discomfort and allow respondents the opportunity to answer all questions without restrictions, the researcher can grant confidentiality to all participants involved in this study. Confidentiality is possible in this study because the researcher will be the only one able to identify the respondent. Documents that contain the research purpose, interview questions, and an informed consent form will be provided to subjects at least two business days before the interview will occur, shown in **Appendix D.**

When analyzing data, this type of interview may allow for a higher level of validity. A higher level of data is possible within this method because the researcher has the freedom to modify questions and interaction to create an environment suited for determining true opinions and attitudes of the respondent. In this study, reexamining and updating the existing framework will develop and refine the ideal model to evaluate the City of New Braunfels program. This will necessitate an unstructured exchange between the researcher and the wellness program administrators and employees. This freedom during the interviews results in a thorough overview of the advantages and disadvantages of the existing Employee Wellness Program administered by the City of New Braunfels to compare it to the ideal model outlined in the conceptual framework.

One possible negative aspect to semi-structured interviews is that statistical analysis cannot typically be determined due to limited quantitative results. Reliability is a drawback to



semi-structured interviews due to the casual nature of those sharing their knowledge in the interviews. This study originally planned to conduct seventeen interviews with City of New Braunfels Employee Wellness Program administrators (3) and City of New Braunfels Employees (14). As previously mentioned, due to a delay in the response of the researcher's IRB application, that number was reduced to one employee who takes part in administering the employee wellness program and six City of New Braunfels employees. Reliability in this study should not be an issue since the interviews are being spanned across all city departments to uncover accurate and honest information.

### **Human Subjects Protection**

The participants of this study were provided a consent document that had all the information about the study, including what the study is regarding, what they will be asked to do when participating in this study, and information of confidentiality, as well as being told that participation is voluntary. If the employee had declined to participate, the alternate employee on the list would have been contacted and given the same information. After reading the information and agreeing to participate, the employee signed the Consent to Participate in a Research Study Form. They also signed a separate section of the Consent to Participate in a Research Study Form that indicates they allow us to record the interview.

This study underwent review by the Texas State Institutional Reviewer Board, and was approved. It was determined that risks to subjects were: 1) minimized and reasonable; and that 2) research procedures are consistent with what a sound research design and do not expose the subjects to unnecessary risk. Full review number 2018072 approved this study on the City

of New Braunfels Wellness Program for research. The approval letter from the Office of Research Integrity and Compliance is located in **Appendix B**.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Results**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings from the seven semi-structured interviews with City of New Braunfels wellness program administrators and employees, document analysis of wellness program literature, and direct observation of wellness program initiatives. For the interviews, the questions were structured in a way to allow open-ended answers. Evidence from the interviews that coincide with the literature is discussed in this chapter. The purpose of this study is to assess the City of New Braunfels Wellness Program in comparison to the practical ideal wellness program model.

#### **Analysis of Results**

This chapter focuses on the results of the data obtained in this study in means of interview, document analysis, and direct observation. Each component of the conceptual framework is discussed separately, with the findings described for each category. The results are discussed in the form of information obtained and compared to the ideal model.

The tables shown in the following sections identify the results of the interviews. The questions asked in the interviews are designed to determine the existence of wellness program components, the specific contents of the program, and the nature and extent to which each component is used. These results pertain to whether the employee being interviewed was aware of anything currently being implemented within the City of New Braunfels wellness program that contained any of the following specific components. The results of this table are

listed in “Yes”, “No”, and “Unknown” responses, depending on how the employee responded to the series of question asked, shown in **Appendix C**. Seven City of New Braunfels employees were interviewed for the purposes of this research.

As revealed in the tables in the following sections, there are some components of the wellness program that the employees interviewed were unaware of. Out of the seven city employees interviewed, the only elements that were known at fact to be implemented in the agency were discounted gym rates, stress management training, and an Employee Assistance Program. The other program elements discussed in the interview were not unanimous with the seven employees interviewed. Some were unaware of certain elements existing in the City of New Braunfels wellness program, such as on-site workout facilities, healthy nutrition and dietary training, behavior modification classes, alcohol and chemical dependency assistance, and alcohol and chemical dependency training for management.

The following sections discuss the interview results in further detail, also addressing the research pertaining to document analysis and direct observation of various elements of the program. These sections are detailed in the elements of the City of New Braunfels wellness program that are currently being implemented. This information was obtained using the various forms of research discussed in the chapter.

## Physical Fitness

### Interviews

**Table 5.1: Physical Fitness Interview Results**

Physical Fitness			
<u>Wellness Program Component</u>	<u>“Yes” Response to this Wellness Program Component</u>	<u>“No” Response to this Wellness Program Component</u>	<u>“Unknown” Response to this Wellness Program Component</u>
Discounted Gym Rates	7	0	0
On-Site Workout Facilities	5	0	2
Designated on Duty Workout Time	2	5	0
Incentives	3	4	0

N=7

According to the results of the interviews with seven City of New Braunfels employees, all participants communicated that they were aware of the gym discounts as a piece of the employee wellness program, and were familiar with the process of enrolling. Five of the interview participants indicated knowledge of these on-site workout facilities, while two of the interview participants were unsure of any existing within the city.

When discussing designated on duty workout time, the only interview respondents that felt there was time appropriated to working out while at work was the Fire Department. Two interview participants indicated there was time dedicated to exercise during work hours were pertaining to the Fire Department. The remaining five indicated they were confident that the city currently did not offer any designated on duty work out time. When reviewing the City of New Braunfels Employee Handbook, I did not see any policies reflecting the appropriation of on

duty exercise time. There was no other documentation I could locate for this research stating otherwise.

Incentives discussed in the interviews within the City of New Braunfels wellness program were minimal. Some respondents felt that offering discounted gym rates to employees was considered an incentive, while others disagreed with that statement. Three of the interview respondents felt that incentives were offered in the current employee wellness program, while four of the interview respondents stated that there were no incentives to participation currently being offered to their knowledge. Another possible incentive for wellness program participation mentioned was the annual Employee Health and Lifestyle Expo, which offers health related door prizes such as fitness watches and workout equipment. For the purposes of interpreting incentives, it is believed that the responses to this discussion in perception to what the interview participants considered being a sufficient incentive.

### **Document Analysis**

When examining the material for the City of New Braunfels wellness program regarding physical fitness, it was found that there is no required physical fitness element. The City of New Braunfels provides fitness center discounts, which are provided to employees in the form of an annual updated memo. This memo includes the participating gyms, their rates for individual and family memberships, amenities, as well as detailed information on how to sign up. These gym discounts are offered on a voluntary basis to employees, and do not require minimum participation to get the rate designated. These are given as direct discounts through corporate

memberships, and the City of New Braunfels does not further contribute to the employee's gym membership costs.

In addition to the discounts, the partnerships with the gyms allows them to come on site to promote various challenges, such as a new year's weight loss challenge, which awards prizes (provided by the gyms) to the "biggest loser" and biggest user". This serves as an incentive to visit the gym more often, and the gyms providing them, with City of New Braunfels Human Resources Department assistance, manage these promotions. The memo goes on to explain that the City of New Braunfels provides these prizes for informational purposes only and does not intend to imply endorsement of any product or service. Rates for any of the gyms located in this memo are subject to change at any time.

### **Direct Observation**

The City of New Braunfels does not offer on-site workout facilities for all employees; however, they do have on-site gyms at the Police Department and all six Fire Stations. Although it is not indicated that employees outside the Police and Fire Departments could or could not work out at these facilities, it was communicated that the current intention of these facilities is to accommodate those departments only. **Photos 5.1 and 5.2** show the current Police Department on-site gym facility, which were obtained through direct observation of the location.

**Photo 5.1: Police Department Gym**



**Photo 5.2: Police Department Gym**





## Psychological and Mental Health

### Interviews

**Table 5.2: Psychological and Mental Health Interview Results**

Psychological and Mental Health			
<u>Wellness Program Component</u>	<u>“Yes” Response to this</u>	<u>“No” Response to this</u>	<u>“Unknown” Response to this</u>
	<u>Wellness Program Component</u>	<u>Wellness Program Component</u>	<u>Wellness Program Component</u>
Stress Management Training	7	0	0
Employee Assistance Program	7	0	0

N=7

When interpreting survey responses, all interview participants reported the city offering sufficient training in topics related to stress management. All respondents stated that they were aware of various efforts from the Human Resources Department in hosting stress management seminars, as well as lunch trainings. Some respondents also indicated that they were also offered department specific stress related training, such as training for Police Officers. Some interview respondents indicated that they believe department specific stress management training is sometimes necessary, depending on the job and department. Other interview respondents indicated participated in stress management related training through the Employee Assistance Program. Regarding the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), all interview respondents stated that they were aware of the EAP provided by the City of New Braunfels. The interview participants also responded they positive feedback, with the majority stating they have used its services.

## Document Analysis

Document analysis was completed for the EAP by obtaining copies of the literature distributed to promote the EAP for the City of New Braunfels. The EAP company used is Deer Oaks, which is accessible through a helpline, by e-mail, or through their website. The Deer Oaks brochure lists the types of problems covered (not an exhaustive list) as: Stress, Tension, Anxiety; Depression, Grief; Anger Management; Marital/Family Problems; Work-Related Difficulties; Legal/Financial Concerns; Health and Wellness Issues; Trauma Recovery; and Substance Abuse.

The Deer Oaks brochure describes an Employee Assistance Program as a service that provides free and confidential assessments, short-term counseling, referrals, prevention, and education services for employees and their dependents. The service is available to all City of New Braunfels employees (full-time, part-time, seasonal, temporary) and anyone in their household. The Deer Oaks literature also states that a trained counselor is available to employees 24/7, 365 days of the year to assist employees with life's stressors to assist employees in living a happy, productive lifestyle. Other EAP services listed in the brochure (not an exhaustive list) are: Assessment and Short-Term Counseling; Crisis Intervention; Community and Health Plan Referrals; Leadership and Supervisor Training; Online Tools, Tips and Articles; Work/Life Balance Coaching; Child Care/Elder Care Resources; Retiree Assistance Program; Legal and Financial Consultations; Substance Abuse Services; Health and Wellness Education; and Take the High Road Program. There was no direct observation pertaining specifically to psychological and mental health.

## Nutrition and Dietary Related Issues

### Interviews

**Table 5.3: Diet and Nutrition Interview Results**

Diet and Nutrition			
<u>Wellness Program Component</u>	<u>"Yes" Response to this</u> <u>Wellness Program Component</u>	<u>"No" Response to this</u> <u>Wellness Program Component</u>	<u>"Unknown" Response to this</u> <u>Wellness Program Component</u>
Healthy Nutrition and Diet Training	6	0	1
Behavior Modification Class (Weight Watchers, Naturally Slim, etc)	5	0	2

N=7

The results of the portion of the interview pertaining to nutrition and dietary initiatives showed that six of the interview participants were aware of some type of nutrition and dietary related training offered on a periodic basis to employees. Some of the interview respondents indicated these classes were available in the form of healthy cooking classes, lunch and learns with a dietitian, and food education in various forms. Six of the interview respondents believe that there are adequate opportunities for health and nutrition education, while one of the interview participants was unsure of any nutrition and diet training being offered.

Five of the employee interview participants reported being aware of a behavior modification course (Weight Watchers) being offered by the City of New Braunfels either currently or at one time. Two of the interview participants reported being unsure if any were currently being offered or have ever been offered by the City of New Braunfels.

## **Document Analysis**

There was no information in the Benefit Guidebook that described a current behavior modification class being implemented by the City of New Braunfels. Some of the interview respondents also noted that the city would pay 50% of the Weight Watchers at Work membership if the employee met minimum criteria of either participation or 5% weight loss throughout the program, which was confirmed by the Human Resources Department. For Weight Watchers at Work, the meetings were held weekly at City Hall with a program coach that presented a topic. Weigh-in was also completed at these meetings.

## **Direct Observation**

Photo 5.3 shows a direct observation of a healthy cooking class provided to all city employees. This class had 30 employee participants, and was provided by Farmhouse Delivery out of Austin, Texas. This class provided a cooking demonstration of seasonal vegetables with the intent of encouraging employees to increase their vegetable intake by using creative forms of cooking. Farmhouse Delivery also spoke about their at home delivery service, which delivers customized fresh produce orders weekly or bi-weekly. These services were offered to employees at a discounted rate. The Farmhouse Delivery cooking class was held at the New Braunfels Public Library and was directly observed by the researcher.

Photo 5.3: Farmhouse Delivery Healthy Cooking Class



## Alcohol and Chemical Dependency

### Interviews

**Table 5.4: Alcohol and Chemical Dependency Interview Results**

Alcohol and Chemical Dependency			
<u>Wellness Program Component</u>	<u>“Yes” Response to this Wellness Program Component</u>	<u>“No” Response to this Wellness Program Component</u>	<u>“Unknown” Response to this Wellness Program Component</u>
Alcohol and Chemical Dependency Assistance	6	0	1
Alcohol and Chemical Dependency Training for Supervisors	0	2	5

N=7

Results of the employee interviews regarding alcohol and chemical dependency shows that six of the participants stated they were aware of alcohol and chemical dependency assistance being offered to employees. Of those six participants, all felt strongly that the service was provided by the EAP. One of the interview participants was unsure of any employee assistance for alcohol and chemical dependency issues. Two of the interview participants were confident that there was no training currently being implemented for supervisors regarding how to handle employees with possible alcohol and/or chemical dependency issues, while the remaining five of the interview participants were unsure of any training currently being implemented for management on this topic.

## **Document Analysis**

The results of the document analysis of the City of New Braunfels Employee Handbook did not show any policy pertaining to alcohol and chemical dependency issues outside of the job; however, information was found in the Deer Oaks EAP brochure stating that substance abuse services are available to employees in this instance. The only documentation that was found in the City of New Braunfels Employee Handbook regarding substance abuse of any type was section LIV. Substance Abuse Testing Procedures, page 89. This policy describes the protocol for employees involved in a motor vehicle accident involving a city-owned or leased vehicle in regard to testing procedures. This policy also states that employees are subject to reasonable suspicion testing for controlled substances and alcohol abuse based on objective facts and/or observable on-duty behavior sufficient to lead a Director/Manager/Supervisor to suspect that an employee is under the influence of controlled substances and/or alcohol. There was no direct observation pertaining specifically to alcohol and chemical dependency.

## **Results Summary**

This chapter presented the results of the interviews, document analysis, and direct observations of the research to assess the employee wellness program provided by the City of New Braunfels. The interviews, document analysis, and direct observation analyzed in this chapter support the criteria of the research. Chapter five explains the overall results and determines whether the City of New Braunfels employee wellness program meets the ideal type developed throughout this study.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusion**

This chapter presents the overall results of this study, while identifying whether the wellness program for the City of New Braunfels meet the practical ideal type as identified in the previous chapters of this study. In following sections of this chapter, recommendations will be made for improving the City of New Braunfels wellness program to implement a more comprehensive and effective program. By implementing these improvements, the City of New Braunfels can create a more efficient program to obtain a healthier workforce.

As described in Chapter 5, there are significant shortfalls in the City of New Braunfels employee wellness program. Although there are components of the four essential categories described in this research in the City of New Braunfels program, it is failing to meet all the elements of the ideal wellness program model. From the data collected, it is apparent that the City of New Braunfels is not successfully meeting all needs of the employees regarding wellness. Overall, the employees of the City of New Braunfels are not receiving adequate guidance and assistance for the four main components of the ideal model.

To assist the City of New Braunfels in creating and implementing a more comprehensive and well-integrated wellness program, recommendations on how to improve each individual wellness category are included in this chapter. The recommendations for improvement of each wellness program category include specific recommendations and suggestions for implementation.



## **Physical Fitness Recommendations**

As established by the current literature, physical fitness is a necessary component of any employee wellness program. The City of New Braunfels current wellness program does provide a voluntary fitness component, but fails to offer onsite workout facilities for all city employees to access or designated on duty time to exercise. A recommendation to improve these practices is to extend employee lunch hours from one hour to an hour and half to encourage exercise for employees. In addition to providing employees with discounted gym rates, the City of New Braunfels could also offer a contribution to gym memberships, such as a fixed contribution rate of ten dollars per employee. Another possible recommendation would be to provide discounted rates to employees at the new Recreation Center (Das Rec), scheduled to open in the summer of 2018. This would encourage employees to visit and put funds into a city facility to generate revenue, rather than an outside gym.

Another recommendation to improve the physical fitness component of the City of New Braunfels wellness program would be to add incentives that will motivate employees to participate in a fitness routine. Incentive ideas discussed by the employee interview participants included additional vacation days and/or discounted insurance premiums with wellness program participation. These types of incentives in addition to the current discounted gym rates offered and other wellness related events would likely give employees motivation to become more active in their day-to-day routine. Based on the information in the literature review and the research of this study, incentives are shown to be a large driving force in employee wellness program implementation and participation, specifically with physical fitness and increasing employee activity.

## **Psychological and Mental Health Recommendations**

Based on the research in this study and previous literature, psychological and mental health is a crucial component to a comprehensive employee wellness program. The City of New Braunfels current wellness program seems to offer a variety of consistent opportunities for stress management related training, but seem to fall short in department specific stress management training. It is important to recognize the specific needs employees require in relation to department specific stress management needs. A recommendation for improvement would include implementation of department specific training, particularly for police and fire, which handle high-stress situations daily. These more specific forms of training will likely provide employees with more adequate training on how to handle stress, in turn making them more productive and effective employees. Another recommendation would be to add more management specific training to assist supervisory staff in how to handle signs of an overstressed employee and how to assist them in addressing these issues by maintaining proactive.

The City of New Braunfels Employee Assistance Program is currently well received by staff. The room for improvement in this component is elevated communication to city employees on what services the EAP provides. In the employee interviews, although all the participants were aware of an EAP, some were not sure of the full range of services Deer Oaks provided, with some not even knowing the name of the service or company being utilized by the city. A more extensive effort to get EAP information to employees, as well as periodically reiterate the information, is crucial in ensuring employees are aware of the service and are using it adequately. Because the service is so well received, it seems crucial in its management

to confirm that employees are aware of their EAP services and how they can assist the employee and their family in their professional and personal lives.

### **Nutrition and Dietary Related Issues Recommendations**

Although it is noted in the data obtained that the City of New Braunfels strongly implements nutrition and diet training for employees, with six out of the seven interview participants acknowledging these types of training take place on a regular basis, there is a need to emphasize healthy diet and nutrition in the day-to-day work settings. In the employee interviews, participants noted that they observe unhealthy foods in the workplace often. Bringing in any type of unhealthy foods for meetings, gatherings, or any other occasion seem to contradict the philosophies being implemented in the seminars and training.

A recommendation to improve this component of the wellness program would be to offer healthy options for catering work events to departments, as well as working with an outside company to provide healthy catering options as well as delivered healthy lunches to employees. Another recommendation in this component would be to take out unhealthy vending machine options, such as chips and candy, and in their place, add fresh items, such as fruit and yogurt. The easier you make access healthy food; the more likely employees are to participate in a healthier diet.

Another recommendation for improving nutrition and dietary related initiatives would be to implement a behavior modification course on a regular basis. This recommendation also includes a continuation of the previous employer contribution based on specified criteria. These types of programs create a positive and supportive environment for healthy habits and allow an

incentive by paying for half of the membership cost if the employee meets the criteria specified. The decision of what type of behavior modification course (Weight Watchers at Work, Naturally Slim, etc) and how often (once annually, twice annually, etc) would be dependent on budget. Another recommendation would be to increase the communication techniques of these programs to employees. With two of the interview respondents stating they weren't sure if the city offered a behavior modification group, there is room for improvement in the communication of these programs.

### **Alcohol and Chemical Dependency Recommendations**

The area of alcohol and chemical dependency support efforts for employees and supervisors shows the need for much improvement. First, even with one of employee interview participants stating that they were unsure if alcohol and chemical dependency assistance for employees existed in the workplace was concerning. The City of New Braunfels Employee Assistance Program offers alcohol and chemical dependency assistance to employees, but there is evidence showing this needs to be communicated more effectively to ensure employees are aware of these services.

There was also strong evidence in the research showing there is no training for management taking place on how to prepare and handle alcohol and chemical dependency issues with employees for Department of Transportation (DOT) or non-DOT regulations. In review of the City of New Braunfels Employee Handbook, there is no policy specifically addressing employees struggling with alcohol or chemical dependency for recommendation for treatment. A recommendation for improvement would be to implement a policy in the

Employee Handbook concerning suspected alcohol and chemical dependency issues (other than reasonable suspicion). These guidelines need to be clearly communicated through policy, as well as adding training for management on how to handle these situations with employees. This policy also needs to clearly state confidentiality of employees seeking or being recommended help, disciplinary recommendations for employees seeking or being recommended help, and the possible effects (if any) on an employee's career.

Proper training for management is highly encouraged to attempt to be proactive in employees involved in these situations. Also, rather than requiring them to seek assistance, a recommendation is to give managers and supervisors the responsibility of monitoring their staff for possible issues with alcohol and chemical dependency and offer dependency assistance to those employees.

### **Summary**

In summary, wellness program administrators in organizations need to think beyond basic diet and exercise to grasp the bigger picture of the comprehensive wellness program. Wellness programs also need to be enjoyable and fun; research shows that employees who perceive a wellness program as substandard will not use it (Berry et al. 2010). The standardization of wellness programs to this comprehensive model may improve the overall program effects in the working population because these standards are likely to incorporate best practices. For the City of New Braunfels, improvements need to be made to achieve the practical ideal type. These additions to program components and funding would assist in

managing the escalating health care costs, as well as properly provide employees with assistance in all the components of wellness.

In summary, although the City of New Braunfels does provide components of the practical ideal type of an ideal employee wellness program, there is room for many improvements within their program. For the most beneficial results, it is also recommended to propose any new components to the wellness program as an overall model, and name the program appropriately. In this model, incentives will be a key element to successful participation in the various components of the wellness program. To adjust the current program toward a more comprehensive and beneficial wellness initiative, the practical ideal type in this study would need to be implemented to the full extent. Communication would also need to be improved in efforts to get wellness program related information to employees to ensure they are aware of the entirety of the employee wellness program. This research could be improved by taking into account solutions of a reactive nature, rather than primarily focusing on proactive components. **Table 6.1** provides a summary of the recommendations made in this chapter for improvement to the City of New Braunfels wellness program.

Table 6.1: Research Conclusions and Recommendations

<u>Wellness Component</u>	<u>Meets Practical Ideal Type:</u> <u>Yes/No/Somewhat</u>	<u>Recommendations for Improvement</u>
<b>Physical Fitness</b>	Somewhat	Add on site workout facility accessible to all employees; some type of on duty exercise time, such as an extended lunch hour; gym membership contributions; discounts to city Recreation Center (Das Rec); incentives for physical fitness participation, such as additional vacation days and/or discounted insurance premiums
<b>Psychological and Mental Health</b>	Yes	Offer department specific training; offer management specific training; increase communication efforts
<b>Nutrition and Diet</b>	Somewhat	Emphasis on healthy eating in the everyday work setting; offer and encourage healthy catering options; swap vending machine options from junk food to healthy snacks; regularly scheduled behavior modification courses; employer contribution to behavior modification courses; communication improvements
<b>Alcohol and Chemical Dependency</b>	No	Improved communication; provide any type of management training (DOT and non-DOT); add policy specific to treatment recommendation
<b>General recommendations:</b> Propose new wellness program as an overall model (name accordingly), provide motivating and adequate incentives, improvement communication efforts for all components, and apply all elements of the ideal model.		

## Appendix A: Approval Letter from the New Braunfels City Manager



September 11, 2017

Texas State University  
Office of Institutional Research  
JC Kellam 883  
601 University Drive  
San Marcos, TX 78666

To Whom It May Concern,

I have received Rebecca Miears' request regarding her study and am pleased to support her research project entitled "Assessment of the Employee Wellness Program for the City of New Braunfels" for her Applied Research Project required for completion of her Masters of Public Administration degree.

Her request to use the City of New Braunfels as a research site is granted. The research will include direct observations of wellness program activities, focused interviews with the wellness program administrators and employees, and document analysis. This authorization covers the time period of August 28, 2017 – December 15, 2017.

Regards,

Robert Camareno  
City Manager



## Appendix B: Approval Letter for IRB Application



In future correspondence please refer to 2018072

October 23, 2017

Rebecca Miears  
Texas State University  
601 University Drive.  
San Marcos, TX 78666

Dear Ms. Miears:

Your IRB application 2018072 titled "Assessment of the Employee Wellness Program for the City of New Braunfels" was reviewed and approved by the Texas State University IRB. It has been determined that risks to subjects are: (1) minimized and reasonable; and that (2) research procedures are consistent with a sound research design and do not expose the subjects to unnecessary risk. Reviewers determined that: (1) benefits to subjects are considered along with the importance of the topic and that outcomes are reasonable; (2) selection of subjects is equitable; and (3) the purposes of the research and the research setting is amenable to subjects' welfare and producing desired outcomes; that indications of coercion or prejudice are absent, and that participation is clearly voluntary.

1. In addition, the IRB found that you need to orient participants as follows: (1) informed consent is required; (2) Provision is made for collecting, using and storing data in a manner that protects the safety and privacy of the subjects and the confidentiality of the data; (3) Appropriate safeguards are included to protect the rights and welfare of the subjects.

**This project is therefore approved at the Exempt Review Level**

2. Please note that the institution is not responsible for any actions regarding this protocol before approval. If you expand the project at a later date to use other instruments, please re-apply. Copies of your request for human subjects review, your application, and this approval, are maintained in the Office of Research Integrity and Compliance.

**Report any changes to this approved protocol to this office. All unanticipated events and adverse events are to be reported to the IRB within 3 days.**

Sincerely,

Monica Gonzales  
IRB Regulatory Manager  
Office of Research Integrity and Compliance

CC: Dr. Patricia Shields

OFFICE OF THE ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH  
601 University Drive | JCK #489 | San Marcos, Texas 78666-4616  
Phone: 512.245.2314 | fax: 512.245.3847 | WWW.TXSTATE.EDU

*This letter is an electronic communication from Texas State University-San Marcos, a member of The Texas State University System.*

## Appendix C: Interview/Research Questions

### Research Questions

**Study Title:** Assessment of the City of New Braunfels Wellness Program

**Researcher:** Rebecca Miers

**Focused Interview Questions: Administrators:**

1. In what way does the City of New Braunfels' Wellness Program have a focus on physical fitness?
2. What types of discounted gym rates and/or on site workout facilities are offered to employees?
3. What efforts does the City of New Braunfels make to offer designated on-duty exercise time?
4. What types of psychological and mental wellness initiatives does the City of New Braunfels' Wellness Program implement?
5. How does the City of New Braunfels offer ways to sustain a supportive social and/or physical environment in relation to mental wellness?
6. What type of Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or other forms of counseling services does the City of New Braunfels offer?
7. In what ways does the City of New Braunfels have a focus on healthy nutrition and diet habits for employees?
8. What type of training from internal and external sources does the City of New Braunfels provide regarding healthy nutrition and diet?
9. What type of behavior modification assistance or support groups (Weight Watchers, Naturally Slim, etc) for unhealthy habits does the City of New Braunfels provide?
10. What type of policy does the organization have in place to handle alcohol and chemical dependency issues with employees?
11. What kind of alcohol and chemical dependency assistance does the City of New Braunfels offer to employees?
12. What type of training does the City of New Braunfels offer management to prepare for situations with employee alcohol and chemical dependency?

**Focused Interview Questions: Employees:**

1. In what ways does the City of New Braunfels' Wellness Program have a focus on physical fitness?
2. What is your experience with discounted gym rates that are offered to employees and what is your experience with on site work out facilities?
3. What kind of incentives does the City of New Braunfels use to enhance employee participation in their Wellness Program?
4. In your experience, how does the City of New Braunfels' Wellness Program work to implement psychological and mental wellness initiatives?
5. In your experience, does the City of New Braunfels offer ways to sustain a supportive social and physical environment in relation to mental wellness?

6. In your experience, what types of stress management assistance does the City of New Braunfels offer in the form of training and literature?
7. To your knowledge, what type of Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and other counseling services does the City of New Braunfels offer?
8. In your opinion, in what way does the City of New Braunfels have a focus on healthy nutrition and diet habits for employees?
9. What types of trainings have you participated in from internal or external sources regarding healthy nutrition and diet?
10. To your knowledge, what type of behavior modification assistance or support groups (Weight Watchers at Work, Naturally Slim, etc) for unhealthy habits does the City of New Braunfels provide?
11. To your knowledge, what type of policy does the organization have in place to handle alcohol and chemical dependency issues with employees?
12. To your knowledge, what kind of alcohol and chemical dependency assistance does the City of New Braunfels offer to employees?
13. If applicable, what type of training does the City of New Braunfels offer management to prepare for situations with employee alcohol and chemical dependency?

\*Types of anticipated responses are listed in italics

## Appendix D: Subject Information and Consent Form



**Study Title:** Assessment of the Employee Wellness Program for the City of New Braunfels

**Principal Investigator:** Rebecca Miears

**Co-Investigator/Faculty Advisor:** Dr. Patricia Shields

**Email:** rp1277@txstate.edu

**Email:** ps07@txstate.edu

**Phone:** 210-391-8265

**Phone:** 512-245-6315

### Introduction:

You are being invited to take part in a research study. This research will study the Wellness Program for the City of New Braunfels. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are an employee at the City of New Braunfels who may or may not have participated in the Wellness Program. It is your choice if you want to participate in this study or not. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to participate in this study.

### What this study is about:

The goal of this research is to develop and refine the ideal model for an employee wellness program, use the ideal model to evaluate the City of New Braunfels' program, and to make recommendations to the City of New Braunfels for improvement.

### What we will ask you to do:

If you agree to be in this study, we will conduct an interview with you. The questions will include your knowledge of the City of New Braunfels Wellness Program, including but not limited to gym discounts/on site workout facilities available, designated on-duty exercise time, incentives, supportive social and physical environments, stress management initiatives, Employee Assistance Program, nutrition/diet education and training, behavior modification/support groups, and alcohol/chemical dependency treatment and training for management. The interview will take place one time and take about 1 hour to complete. With your permission, we would also like to record the interview.

### Risks/Discomforts:

In the event that some of the survey or interview questions make you uncomfortable or upset, you are always free to decline to answer or to stop your participation at any time.

**Benefits/Alternatives:**

There benefit of this study to you include possible improvement of the current Employee Wellness Program for the City of New Braunfels.

**Your answers will be confidential:**

The records of this study will be kept private and confidential. In any sort of report we make public, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be kept in a locked file. If we record the interview, we will destroy the recording after it has been transcribed, which I anticipate to be within two months of the recording. The members of the research team, and the Texas State University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) may access the data. The ORC monitors research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research participants.

Data will be kept for three years (per federal regulations) after the study is completed and then destroyed.

**Taking part is voluntary:**

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may skip any questions that you do not want to answer. If you decide to take part, you are free to withdrawal at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits to which you are entitled.

**Questions:**

If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in this study, you may contact the below listed people.

Principle Investigator: Rebecaa Miears  
Email: [rp1277@txstate.edu](mailto:rp1277@txstate.edu)  
Phone: 210-391-8265

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Patricia Shields  
Email: [ps07@txstate.edu](mailto:ps07@txstate.edu)  
Phone: 512-245-6315

This project was approved by the Texas State IRB on October 23, 2017. Pertinent questions or concerns about the research, research participants' rights, and/or research-related injuries to participants should be directed to the IRB Chair, Dr. Denise Gobert 512-245-8351 – ([dgobert@txstate.edu](mailto:dgobert@txstate.edu)) or to Monica Gonzales, IRB Regulatory Manager 512-245-2334 - ([meg201@txstate.edu](mailto:meg201@txstate.edu)).

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

**Study Title:** Assessment of the City of New Braunfels Wellness Program

**Researcher:** Rebecca Miears

**Written Consent**

I confirm that the researcher has explained the elements of informed consent. I know that my participation is voluntary, and that I do not need to answer all questions. The purpose of the research has been explained. The procedures as well as the time commitment have been outlined. I understand issues of confidentiality.

I have read the attached information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in this study.

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**In addition to agreeing to participate, I also consent to having my interview recorded.**

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_



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