

Collaboration Expands Health and Wellness Programs in Mitchell

Key Components

Efforts in Mitchell serve as a strong example of expanding health promotion programming to meet the various needs of community members with the assistance of grant funds from the South Dakota Department of Health (SD DOH). Lifestyle modification programming fits within the scope of practice for the Mitchell Recreation Center, so they chose to apply for grant funding to intervene on behalf of their members and the community. The target audience for each program varies based on the chronic conditions that community members are dealing with, and the funding that is available.

Thomas Gulledge, who serves as the Fitness and Wellness Coordinator at the Mitchell Recreation Center, was awarded WorkWell funding from SD DOH in 2019 to provide blood pressure monitors to City of Mitchell employees. In December 2020, Gulledge applied for and received funding to implement a non-clinical self-measured blood pressure (SMBP) monitoring program in the community. The SMBP program along with clinical care helps people with hypertension lower and control their blood pressure.

Next, Gulledge applied for funding from SD DOH to start a National Diabetes Prevention Program (NDPP) in Mitchell. Their first cohort started in February 2021. The NDPP is a lifestyle change program proven to prevent or delay the onset of type 2 diabetes in adults with prediabetes.

In January 2022, Community Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Coalition received grant funding from SD DOH to implement Communities That Care (CTC). Dakota Wesleyan University serves as the fiscal agent for this project. CTC is a prevention system that identifies risk factors and behavior issues among middle and high school students, then helps communities select and implement interventions to address these issues. Additionally, this funding allowed for a CTC Program Coordinator to be hired in March 2022 to carry out these efforts in Mitchell.

Most recently, in March 2022, the City of Mitchell was awarded a WorkWell Mental Health grant through SD DOH. This grant focuses on employee mental health and includes additional National Alliance for Mental Illness of South Dakota trainings for their employees.

Challenges and Solutions

A major barrier to implementing programming that was funded by SD DOH was the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, there were additional barriers beyond that. For example, the non-clinical SMBP monitoring program implemented in Mitchell was different from classic models, so community members and healthcare providers were initially apprehensive to join the program. The same hesitation presented itself when the Mitchell Recreation Center implemented NDPP, because it was the first time this program was offered in Mitchell. Thanks to the partnership and support of Sanford Health Mitchell, they were able to overcome these challenges and create the foundational programming for the community health and wellness model.

Successes

The SMBP program had over 100 participants and over 50 people complete the six-week program. Nearly all participants showed marked improvements in overall blood pressure readings through lifestyle modification and structured, supervised exercise sessions. As a result of SMBP, four participants figured out they were consistently hypertensive and made appointments with their physicians to start medications.

In the first cohort of NDPP, more than half of the participants achieved their weight loss goals of 5-7 percent, with nearly all of them reaching double-digits in percent of weight loss. One participant called the Mitchell Recreation Center and said, "I haven't seen this weight since 1989." Another participant lost over 75 pounds. A City of Mitchell employee who participated in NDPP, was recognized by his coworkers for taking his two 15-minute breaks to walk in a parking lot. For him, this was an action that would have never taken place without this programming.

Through the WorkWell Mental Health funding, the City of Mitchell offered a mental health lunch and learn for employees. Two employees who attended agreed that "this was the best and most relevant lunch and learn the city has ever put on".

Implementing the CTC program and bringing a CTC coordinator into the community has been met with high praise. Multiple community members have thanked Gulledge for seeking out and applying for this funding while also expressing how important it is to address their children's mental health, especially after the past two years.

The Mitchell Recreation Center staff now understand the vision of fundamental opportunities for community members to participate in community health and wellness programming, regardless of their socioeconomic status.

Evidence-Based Interventions

SMBP - Recommended Intervention ([Strong Evidence](#))

NDPP - Recommended Intervention ([Strong Evidence](#))

CTC - [Evidence-Based Practice](#)

“ I can mow my own lawn again, which I haven't done in years. I played with my kids for an hour straight this weekend and I couldn't even walk from my car to the front of the Rec Center without sitting down to rest six weeks ago.”

– Participant

Next Steps

Mitchell has created the foundation for a vision of community health and wellness programming, and the integration of community centers into the healthcare model. They will continue running the programs supported by SD DOH while also running additional programming that they have implemented in conjunction with Sanford Health Mitchell. They plan to seek funding for future programming, especially for the CTC Coordinator as that is such a needed resource in their community.

Gulledge's advice to anyone working on a similar project is to take the leap. He had never written a grant application for more than \$5,000. After he was denied for the first big funding request he submitted, he started looking at projects that were outside of the ordinary. As a result, he found creative ways to really help community members. Gulledge shared, "Don't be afraid to fail."

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