

Mid-America Coalition on Health Care
Community Initiative on Depression
Worksite Informational Interventions on Depression

Introduction

The Mid-America Coalition on Health Care (Coalition) began the *Community Initiative on Depression (CID)* in 2001 in an effort to bring together employers, health care providers, health plans, and other stakeholders around a common area of concern. Depression was selected because of a growing awareness about its high prevalence and its significant impact on the workplace (JOEM, 2005). A full description of the *CID* can be found at the Coalition's web site, www.machc.org.

Informational Interventions

A major goal of the *CID* was to improve general awareness about depression. Based on a Coalition-developed Employee Attitudinal Survey (JOEM, 2005) and other initial assessments, a broad-based initiative was planned to include workplace education and collaboration with the employers' EAPs, local mental health agencies, and national groups, such as the National Partnership for Workplace Mental Health, part of the American Psychiatric Association. In 2004, as improvements were being made in the local infrastructure for depression treatment, the Coalition began to develop informational interventions in the form of communication campaigns in the workplace with the assistance of a consulting occupational therapist experienced in worksite health promotion. A model intervention was developed with optional components to allow employers to tailor their efforts to their particular work culture and communication standards. It was felt that customizing the campaigns to each employer would increase employee acceptance and enhance the value of the campaigns. Because the Coalition learned that most employers used electronic communication as their primary vehicle for information, with print materials as a secondary method, the Coalition provided a model for both electronic and print distribution.

The informational interventions occurred primarily from December 2004 through May 2005.

Model Intervention

These communication campaigns included information about: 1) symptoms of depression and its often chronic nature, 2) treatment options and treatment effectiveness, 3) resources available to employees and families, and 4) steps for accessing care. Each group's employee assistance program (EAP) was engaged in the communication campaigns to increase employee understanding of the unique resources available and ways to access services. Materials in electronic formats were housed on the Coalition's website as well as each employer's EAP website and employer intranets when possible. The employers were provided print materials upon request.

The basic components in the model campaign and the purpose behind each are described below:

1. **Letter from Coalition president to key leaders (CEO, CFO, COO, Human Resources Director)** – acknowledged the organization's involvement in the *Community Initiative on Depression* and the role of their committee representative in rolling out the campaigns internally.
2. **Management letter** – A letter from human resource executives, prepared managers in advance of communications with employees at large, addressed the financial impact of depression to their individual company, and provided management-specific resources.
3. **Employee letter & depression pamphlet** – A letter from human resource executives, described the employer's collaboration with other employers and provided information on symptoms of depression, treatment, company-specific mental health benefits, and community resources. The pamphlet was developed in collaboration with the American Psychiatric Association.

Enhancement of the basic communications was encouraged through such activities as:

1. **Manager training meetings** – to help managers and supervisors recognize employee productivity issues that may be related to depression and use company-provided resources.
2. **Employee meetings or "Lunch –N- Learns"** – to highlight depression signs and symptoms and enhance visibility of employee assistance programs.
3. **Employer newsletters** – Sample newsletter copy was provided to reinforce messages in the employee letter and pamphlet. Some employers chose to distribute information through the newsletters alone in place of the employee letter and pamphlet.

Several employers expanded on the above offerings to include such innovative approaches as **customized videos** available on the company's intranet site as well as **live presentations**

available by **telephone conference** and through **web casts**. In addition, a number of the EAPs responded by providing posters or offering **E-blasts**, or brief messages distributed electronically through internal workplace e-mail systems, on several depression-related topics and provided speakers for the manager and employee meetings.

In addition to employer campaigns, local health plans distributed parallel communications to members and providers and a letter from the CID co-chairs was distributed to the physician community through the local medical society.

Process

Through regular meetings with the employers together and individually, the Coalition was able to facilitate discussions and springboard innovative ideas about the campaigns. The group meetings allowed for an atmosphere of creative and friendly sharing of ideas and challenges. Individual employer meetings with the Coalition's consultant helped the committee representatives from each company develop and orient internal planning teams, customize the interventions, and generate timelines for completion.

Participating Employers

American Academy of Family Physicians

This national association of family doctors, founded in 1947, is one of the largest medical organizations and has more than 94,000 members. Its primary purpose is to promote and maintain high quality standards for family physicians in primary care. Headquartered in Leawood, Kansas, the Academy employs approximately 350 people in a variety of roles to support patient and physician education and advocacy. It publishes a clinical journal for physicians in primary care, a monthly all-member news and features publication, and a publication on practice management and socioeconomic issues.

The Academy supports employee well being by offering a variety of benefits, including flexible work schedules, an employee assistance program, and a private room for nursing mothers. Its wellness program includes an on-site fitness center and an internal Wellness Committee as well as services provided by a local hospital, monthly activities and an annual Wellness Week.

CID Components:

- Internal planning led by Human Resources Director
- Newsletter article
- EAP E-blast
- Employee Lunch-N-Learn

While the Academy did not have representation as an employer in the CID in the initial stages, they supported the Coalition's efforts through involvement on their board of directors and through local and national physician communications. When they hired a human resources director who had previously been involved in the CID, she implemented the campaign in her new workplace.

American Century Investments

American Century Investments is a multi-disciplined asset management firm offering diverse investment vehicles to clients worldwide. The company has its headquarters in Kansas City, Missouri, and additional offices in New York and the San Francisco/Bay area. American Century Investments employs approximately 1,900 people guided by a common set of principles that influence how they work with investors, how they recognize and reward employees, and how they contribute to the economic and social welfare of the communities where they have a presence.

This employer provides comprehensive wellness services including regular health screenings, onsite fitness equipment and programs, massage therapy, and a wide variety of educational

programs. Employees are incentivized to participate in health risk appraisals by reductions in health plan premiums, and targeted health information is sent to employees with high health risks.

CID Components:

- Internal planning team led by a senior benefits specialist along with personnel from an external health promotion contractor
- Senior leader letter
- Management e-mail and intranet resources
- Employee e-mails (3), depression pamphlet and additional information and links to resources
- Information on community resources
- Mental Health Benefit Summary
- Employee newsletter articles
- Employee Lunch-N-Learn on holiday stress by EAP
- Internally developed custom video on depression developed by health promotion staff, available on intranet

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City (BCBSKC) is the area's largest health benefits provider, with more than 880,000 members in greater Kansas City, northwest Missouri, and northeast Kansas. This locally owned not-for-profit company has operated in Kansas City, Missouri, since 1982 when two local plans, originating in 1938 and 1943, merged.

In the eight decades it has operated, the company has invested heavily in improving the quality of healthcare in the Kansas City community, including advances in its computer systems to enable effective tracking of all business components. They operate a number of physician and hospital networks to provide a variety of group and individual health plans to meet the needs of their customers and improve the health of the community.

BCBSKC's provides their 1,100 employees with a full service wellness center and holds monthly health education presentations. Disease management programs assist individuals with chronic conditions, such as diabetes, asthma, and cardiopulmonary disease. New Directions Behavioral Health, a wholly-owned for-profit subsidiary of BCBSKC, provides employee assistance and behavioral health management services to BCBSKC employees and to clients nationwide.

CID Components:

- Internal planning team led by Vice President/Medical Director and Vice President of Human Resources
- Newsletter
- Employee Lunch-n-Learn

During the time period of the Community Initiative on Depression, BCBSKC also provided information packets to physicians in their networks on depression and coordination of care as

well as postpartum depression. In addition, a letter to all patients with new prescriptions for antidepressant medications, a proportion of whom were BCBSKC employees, describing common side effects and the length of time expected for relief of symptoms increased patient adherence to the medications significantly.

Carondelet Health

Carondelet Health is a not-for-profit, Catholic sponsored health care system in the Kansas City, Missouri metropolitan area serving the community with innovative, convenient and quality health care through two medical centers (St. Joseph Medical Center in Kansas City, Missouri, and St. Mary's Medical Center), long term care facilities, and home health care services.

Carondelet offers a wide variety of wellness services as a line of business to the community and to its 3,300 employees, including health risk appraisals, health screenings, health education classes, and fitness activities.

CID Components:

- Internal planning team led by Vice President, Organizational Development
- EAP presentation to Leadership Councils at both medical centers
- Presentation to Organizational Development Committee of the Carondelet Health board of directors and Health and Welfare Trustees
- Senior leader letter
- Management e-mail
- Employee e-mail and depression pamphlet
- Mental Health Benefit Summary
- Employee newsletter columns (3)
- Intranet link
- EAP E-blast to employees and managers
- Manager meeting
- Employee meeting with EAP for departments not covered by e-mail

City of Kansas City, Missouri (KCMO)

The city of KCMO is the nation's 36th largest city in population (441,500) and the 13th largest in land area (318 square miles). The metro area straddles the Missouri-Kansas state line and includes more than 176 cities and 15 counties. Kansas City, Mo., includes parts of four counties and 15 school districts. Kansas City is the hometown headquarters of a number of corporations, including Hallmark Cards, Sprint Corp., American Centuries Investments, Cerner, Yellow Corp, H&R Block, and Russell Stover Candies.

KCMO employs 4,650 people in services including health, sanitation, water, fire, aviation, parks and recreation and many more. A full-time employee wellness coordinator is provided through a local hospital and funded by the city's health insurance provider. The wellness program offers a

downtown fitness center, annual health risk assessment, clinical screenings and fun, educational programs that promote a healthy lifestyle. In addition, the health department serves city employees through a variety of communications and education programs.

CID Components:

- Internal planning team led by benefits and health department personnel
- Employee letter and depression information to home
- Mental Health Benefit Summary
- Employee newsletter articles (6)
- Depression fact sheets
- Payroll stuffers
- Postcard to home
- Pilot meetings with Health and Water department managers and employees – at these meetings a number of individuals expressed gratitude for covering a mental health topic and spontaneously gave personal testimonies supporting effectiveness of depression treatment and the importance of getting help. EAP personnel also provided helpful information about the ease of using services to reduce barriers to treatment. Additional worksite meetings and planned for the fall 2005.

HCA Midwest Division

HCA is a comprehensive, not-for-profit, health delivery system based in Nashville, Tennessee, whose mission is to improve the health status of residents of the communities they serve by developing and managing a comprehensive, integrated regional health system. HCA provides a continuum of compassionate, high-quality, cost-effective, financially viable health and health-related services for the benefit of the community. The HCA Midwest Division serves the Kansas City, Missouri metropolitan area and other regions within a 150-mile radius of Kansas City. The Midwest Division includes 15 general acute care, rehabilitation, and behavioral health centers with 3,000 physicians and numerous outpatient and medical office facilities.

The HCA Midwest Division has 12,000 employees in total. Several hospitals in the Midwest Division participated in the Community Initiative on Depression, including Baptist Lutheran, Independence Regional Center/Medical Center of Independence, Lee's Summit Hospital, and Overland Park Regional Medical Center.

CID Components:

Components varied among individual hospitals but in general consisted of:

- Internal planning team led by each hospital's human resources director
- Senior leader letter
- Management e-mail
- Employee e-mail and depression pamphlet
- Mental Health Benefit Summary
- Employee newsletter article

- Manager meeting with EAP describing resources available to help in supervising an employee struggling with depression

Blackwell Sanders Peper Martin

Blackwell Sanders is one of the leading commercial law firms in the Midwest and is recognized nationally for their transactional and litigation practices. Clients include Fortune 500, multinational, middle- market public companies and some of the largest privately held companies in the United States in the energy, finance, healthcare, manufacturing, communications, retail, consulting and construction industries.

Headquartered in Kansas City, Blackwell Sanders has offices in St. Louis and Springfield, Missouri; Omaha, Nebraska; Washington, D.C.; Overland Park, Kansas; Edwardsville, Illinois; and London, England.

The firm employs approximately 700 people and provides a variety of wellness and onsite fitness services.

CID Components:

- Internal planning led by Human Resources Director and Wellness Program Director
- Senior leader letter
- Management e-mail
- Manager meeting
- Employee e-mail and depression pamphlet
- Mental Health Benefit Summary
- Employee newsletter article
- EAP E-blast
- Employee Lunch-N-Learn

Cerner Corporation

The Cerner Corporation is a worldwide leader in healthcare information technology with over 1,500 clients. Their systems, including a complete, centralized electronic medical record, allow clients to streamline communication and reduce error, risk, and waste. The company has invested more than \$600 million in research and development since 1995.

Cerner employs more than 5,000 associates, including almost 800 clinicians and more than 1,000 engineers. The company provides comprehensive benefits, including a consumer driven health plan with disease management programs and an associate center with a variety of wellness and onsite fitness services.

CID Components:

- Internal planning led by Benefits Specialist
- Senior leader letter
- Management e-mail

- Manager meeting with EAP, video taped for later access
- Employee e-mail and depression pamphlet
- Mental Health Benefit Summary
- EAP E-blast
- Employee meeting with EAP, video taped for later access

Hallmark Cards

Hallmark, established in Kansas City in 1944 as a privately held company, owns and operates a number of businesses in the greeting card, family entertainment and personal development industries. In 2004, Hallmark reported consolidated net revenues of \$4.4 billion.

Hallmark has more than 18,000 full-time employees worldwide with about 4,500 working at the Kansas City headquarters, including artists, designers, stylists, writers, editors, production staff and photographers. Hallmark also publishes products in more than 30 languages and distributes them in more than 100 countries.

Through its long-standing employee wellness program, Hallmark has provided a variety of services including nutritious food services, fitness and recreation programs, and regular employee Lunch-n-Learns on numerous health topics.

CID Components:

- Internal planning led by Medical Services Manager
- Senior leader letter
- Management e-mail
- Employee e-mail and depression pamphlet
- Mental Health Benefit Summary
- Employee newsletter article
- Employee Lunch-N-Learns (3) by physicians and psychologists

Saint Luke's Health System

The Saint Luke's Health System is a leader in quality health care in Kansas City. The system includes nine hospitals and many physician practices in the Kansas City metropolitan area and surrounding region providing a wide range of primary, acute, tertiary, and chronic care services, including home health care, rehabilitation, employee assistance, and behavioral health programs. The Saint Luke's Medical Group operates physician offices throughout the Kansas City region and includes family practice physicians, pediatricians, internists, and several specialists.

Saint Luke's provides employee assistance program services and comprehensive employee wellness services to its own 6,000 employees and to employees of leading companies in the Kansas City region. Saint Luke's employees are provided reduced health plan premiums for participating in health risk appraisals and screenings, and personal letters with targeted health information are sent to employees in their areas of health risk.

CID Components:

- Internal planning led by Employee Wellness Program Director
- Senior leader letter
- Management e-mail
- Employee e-mail and depression pamphlet
- Mental Health Benefit Summary
- Employee newsletter article
- EAP E-blast
- Employee Lunch-N-Learn
- Meetings for employees without access to e-mail, led by peer leader in EAP
- Grand Rounds continuing education for physicians

State of Kansas

The State of Kansas employs 38,000 people in many diverse fields, such as accounting, engineering, health-care, geology, transportation, and education, to name a few. The State supports employee health with a variety of programs including a proactive employee assistance program and disease management programs.

CID Components:

- Internal planning led by Manager of Integrated Benefits and the State's EAP service provider
- Employee e-mail
- Newsletter
- Posters
- EAP web site

Sprint

Sprint, which recently merged with Nextel, is one of the largest communication companies in the world. Beginning as a local Kansas telephone company in 1899, the company grew into one of the country's largest independent local telephone providers. By 1986, Sprint completed the first nationwide, 100% digital, fiber-optic network and today the company is a global leader in integrated voice and data services. During the *CID*, Sprint employed approximately 59,000 people worldwide with nearly 20,000 housed at the world headquarters in Overland Park, Kansas.

Comprehensive fitness facilities and wellness programs are available to Sprint employees at the Kansas headquarters as well as a number of other Sprint facilities. All employees receive informational mailings on a variety of health topics and are eligible for health risk assessments, use of a nurse advocate line. Disease management and high-risk management support services are also available. Sprint also provides medical services at an onsite clinic for helping employees with common illnesses or for assessing on-the-job injuries.

CID Components:

- Internal planning led by Corporate Benefits Manager
- Senior leader letter
- Management e-mails (2)
- Conference calls (3) to Employee Relations managers
- Postcard to home from wellness program
- Employee e-mail and depression pamphlet
- Mental Health Benefit Summary
- Employee newsletter article on depression
- Physician presentation to employees on stress and depression available live by webcast at noon and by download later – nearly 1,800 people participated
- Physician presentation on depression to internal managers of disability

University of Kansas Hospital

The University of Kansas Medical Center (KU Med) is a major research institution with an international reputation serving primarily the State of Kansas. KU Med is a leader in discovery of new medical knowledge and development of programs in research, education, and patient care. The University of Kansas Hospital (KU Hospital) is an institution that supports the training arm of KU Med and provides care to the Kansas City metropolitan area as well as the State of Kansas and beyond. In 2004, the KU Hospital grew to over 400 million dollars in revenue. KU Med and KU Hospital have an onsite fitness facility that offers a variety of programs and services to students, staff, and faculty.

CID Components:

- Internal planning led by the Benefits Director
- Newsletter to home – information about depression and the EAP were included in the inaugural issue of this new employee/dependent communication vehicle in May '05.
- Mental health benefit information – also included in newsletter
- EAP information – January '05 marked the beginning of a contract with a new EAP provider. Print information about accessing help was distributed.
- E-mail to employees

Employee Response to Campaigns

In general, employees at participating worksites had far more positive responses to the communications and employee meetings than was initially anticipated. In some of the workplaces, there was little comment at all, yet in many worksites, the letters and meetings opened opportunities for communication about personal experiences with depression, which would have never been broached in a public context. While a few people expressed negative impressions of some aspects of care (e.g., feeling unsure about who was in charge of their care, their psychologist or their doctor), the majority of people had positive messages to relay about treatment for depression, including medications and therapy, as well as self-care strategies, such as exercise and social support. Still others had positive comments about their supervisors who were sometimes the first to recognize that depression symptoms were recurring and who helped the employee take actions earlier the next symptoms occurred. A number of people stepped forward saying the focus on depression gave them an opportunity to reach out to others, reinforcing the positive impact that treatment had on their lives. They hoped that speaking publicly about depression would reduce its stigma and encourage others to seek care. Many expressed gratitude to the employers for tackling a somewhat controversial and difficult topic.

Coalition Observations

After developing the model for the informational interventions, the Coalition helped the individual employer representatives begin envisioning their own campaigns through group brainstorming about how the “model components” would work in their worksites. While all of the employer representatives to the *CID* expressed a desire to participate in communicating to their employees, none of their job descriptions or organizational goals included the responsibility for this role.

Understandably, the planning processes at individual worksites were, consequently, bogged down at times by competing managerial priorities. In a number of the organizations, the representative participating in the *CID* employer meetings was not the “point person” within the organization who ultimately took the lead in implementing the informational interventions within the company. The Coalition helped in transitioning leadership to the implementer(s) by:

1. helping employer representatives engage more people internally to assist with the communication implementation (i.e., recruit, orient and develop teams of people from departments outside benefits, such as communications, medical, disability, etc. and facilitate the group process within these teams) and customization to their own corporate culture,
2. helping the implementers develop ownership for their interventions,
3. at times, nagging the implementers to sustain momentum and accomplish tasks on their self-imposed deadlines, and
4. cheering them on to completion. In addition, because the representatives were encouraged to share progress reports and experiences with implementation during group meetings with representatives from other companies, a sense of accountability to the group, as well as perhaps friendly competition among the employers, ensued.

The entire process, from planning to implementation of the campaigns, took several months longer than the Coalition anticipated. The amount of time required for planning and

approvals at individual worksites was a lengthier process than expected, and the months initially targeted (October-November) by the Coalition for the interventions were inconvenient for many of the employers due to other organizational priorities (e.g. open enrollment for health plan benefits). In several cases, the person representing the organization changed roles or left the employer requiring additional time by the Coalition to familiarize the new people with the CID goals and the worksite campaigns.

The print, radio, and television media in Kansas City supported the communications efforts by publicizing a Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce Town Hall meeting on depression that occurred concurrently with many of the employers' communication campaigns. Few media sources, however, were willing to provide in depth coverage into some of the "sticky issues" surrounding depression, such as its contribution to disability, controversies about medical treatment, discrimination against people with mental illness in the workplace, or profiles of people who struggle with chronic depression. There was an almost universal desire by the media to interview individuals with depression as part of the "real" story. It is the Coalition's hope that the employers will continue to provide depression information to employees well into the future and the community will further its discussion about depression, covering some of the more difficult aspects, as the awareness about this condition grows.

Reference

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