

Walking the Talk in Asotin County

Improving health through policy and environmental change is not always easy. Staff at the Asotin County Health District knew that modeling these changes in their own workplace could help set the stage. The Asotin County Worksite Wellness Project, funded in part by the Preventive Health Block Grant, created policies to help staff stop tobacco use, be active, and breastfeed their babies.

Issue

In Asotin County, two in five adults do not get enough physical activity and 25 percent are obese.¹ Hearing this, the Healthy Communities program at the Asotin County Health District decided that change needed to begin at home.

Intervention

In 2010, the Healthy Communities program at the Asotin County Health District formed a Worksite Wellness committee to improve staff wellness. They named two priority areas:

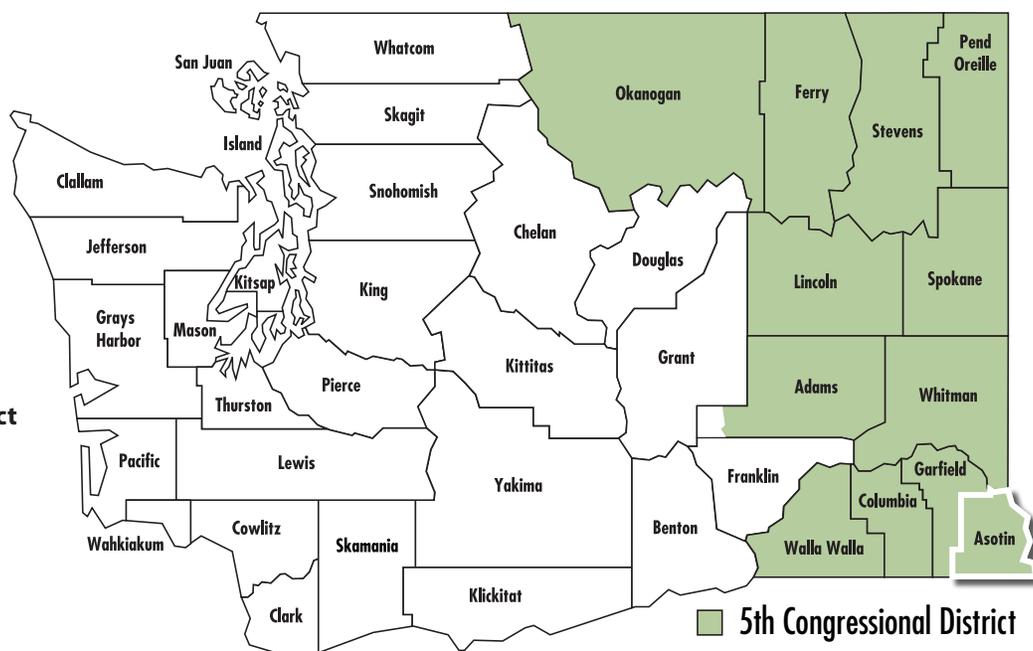
- Support for employees to exercise during the work day
- Support for breastfeeding mothers in the workplace

The committee developed worksite policies to encourage these individual changes. These policies allow each employee 30 minutes a day for exercise, as well as flex time for pumping breast milk during work hours. The health district also received a grant from the Washington Health Foundation to purchase exercise equipment.

Impact

The Asotin County Health District now has a tobacco-free hiring policy as well. Many employees are vocal about the impact of these policies on their health. They are reporting changes such as weight loss, lower cholesterol, and stopping blood pressure medication.

The Asotin County Health District's policy approach to worksite wellness is now a model for other businesses and organizations in Washington State. In April 2011, they hosted a Worksite Wellness and Productivity symposium that was very well attended. As a result, the local hospital now supports staff wellness, and the local aquatic center is now a breastfeeding friendly facility with a worksite policy.



County population:² 21,623

Asotin County Health District
Clarkston, Washington
<http://ac-hd.org/>