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## MODELS FOR PRACTICE

### FOCUS AREA: HEART DISEASE AND STROKE

**Program Name:** Well Valdosta-Lowndes County

**Location:** Valdosta, Georgia

**Problem Addressed:** Chronic Disease including Heart Disease

**Healthy People 2010 Objective:** 12

**Web Address:** <http://www.lcpfh.org>

#### SNAPSHOT

The Well Valdosta-Lowndes County program was developed to combat the problems associated with preventable chronic disease within the community. The program targets risky behaviors with a three-fold approach designed to guide individuals through a continuum of change that results in a healthier lifestyle. The program utilizes a proven model called the Well Workplace that was developed by the Wellness Councils of America. As an incentive to implementing the Well Workplace model, a company, church, or school may apply to be recognized nationally as a Well Workplace once it has fully implemented all seven steps. In addition to recognizing individual entities as Well Workplaces, the Well Councils of America will recognize the community as a Well City if 20 percent of the workforce is employed by companies that have been designated as Well Workplaces.

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#### THE MODEL

**Blueprint:** The Well Valdosta-Lowndes County program is a collaborative effort between Lowndes County Partnership for Health, Public Health, South Georgia Medical Center, Smith Hospital, Valdosta State University, two public school systems, local industry representatives, and other health-related organizations. The project targets risky behaviors with a three-fold approach designed to guide individuals through a continuum of change that results in a healthier lifestyle. Services are delivered at the place of employment, schools, or churches. The first approach focuses on awareness through health screens, literature distribution, newsletters, posters, and paycheck stuffers that are designed to help individuals realize the benefits of a healthier lifestyle. The second approach is education and motivation, which concentrates on education programs such as seminars and lunch-and-learns. The final component of the model concerns intervention. This includes nutrition and physical activity courses along with individual case management for individuals who recognize the need to change and are ready to take action to implement the desired changes.

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In 1999, the Lowndes County Partnership for Health (LCPH) received a three-year Federal Rural Health Outreach grant to combat cardiovascular disease in Lowndes County. This program utilizes the above-mentioned methods and was successfully implemented in five of the larger employers in Lowndes County, 10 local African-American churches, and a public middle school.

The Well Valdosta-Lowndes County project was developed to build upon the success of the Rural Health Outreach grant project. To successfully implement this project, LCPH is utilizing a proven model called the Well Workplace developed by the Wellness Councils of America. The Well Workplace program outlines seven basic steps that a company, church, or school should take to implement a health management program that addresses all aspects of disease prevention. The seven-step (or seven C's) Well Workplace model includes:

- concentrating of senior level support,
- creating cohesive wellness teams,
- collecting data to drive programming efforts,
- crafting an operating plan,
- choosing appropriate interventions,
- creating a supportive environment, and
- consistently evaluating outcomes.

The program is staffed with three full-time salaried staff members, 20 nursing students, four community volunteers, and is overseen by a 24 member board of directors.

**Making a Difference:** The program was initiated after LCPH received a three-year Federal Rural Health Outreach grant to combat cardiovascular disease in Lowndes County. The program will be sustained through a combination of grants and fee-for-service programs. Currently, 18 companies, 20 churches, and a local middle school are participating in the project (over 10,900 adults and students). Additional companies and churches will be added to the project, and there are plans to begin a childhood obesity clinic within the next two years.

Currently, success is measured by the number of companies that have signed up to participate in the project. Most worksite wellness programs require three to five years of operation before measurable results are available. As the program progresses, success will be measured by health screen data and progress through the stages of behavior change by individuals.

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**Beginnings:** The program began in November 2001 after a community health needs assessment identified chronic disease as a problem in Lowndes County. The organization is a 501(c)(3) with a hired executive director, board of directors, and elected officers. The original stakeholders include the Lowndes County Partnership for Health, Public Health, South Georgia Medical Center, Valdosta State University, Georgia Power, and Langdale Forest Products. New stakeholders continue to be added.

**Challenges and Solutions:** The primary challenge facing the program today is keeping up with the demand for services. The program is the only agency providing worksite wellness programs, and demand at this point is overwhelming.

The original program was funded through Georgia's Indigent Care Trust Fund. Also, the program received a Federal Rural Health Outreach grant to implement a program called the Well City Diabetes Initiative.

The program is brought to the attention of potential funders through grant proposals and speaking engagements. The program is publicized to the public through company and church communication channels, newspaper articles, speaking engagements, and through the board of directors' contacts with state officials.

Currently, the program has received the endorsement of the Mayor and City Council, the County Commissioners, and the Chamber of Commerce.

### **PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION**

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