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## MODELS FOR PRACTICE

### FOCUS AREA: PUBLIC HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE

**Program Name:** Oklahoma Certified Healthy Business Program

**Location:** Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

**Problem Addressed:** Public Health Infrastructure

**Healthy People 2010 Objective:** 23

**Web Address:** [www.okturningpoint.org](http://www.okturningpoint.org)

#### SNAPSHOT

Turning Point is a national program in various states that aims to increase collaboration at the community level to improve quality of life. The Oklahoma Turning Point Council was created to pool together the efforts of Oklahoma organizations, communities, and consumers to maintain and improve the public's health. The Council provides structure and guidance in a variety of ways. It conducts planning and follow-up work; organizes collaborative efforts through partnership with organizations, communities, and community stakeholders; and also offers technical assistance. In addition to providing structure and guidance, the Oklahoma Turning Point Council also develops resolutions that promote policies in several areas including physical fitness, nutrition, tobacco, and access to health care.

An example of a specific program the Oklahoma Turning Point Council has developed is the Oklahoma Certified Healthy Business Program, which encourages business to implement employee health programs. The program has large participation from rural businesses, especially since the great majority of businesses in Oklahoma employ 25 or less people, and the state has only three metropolitan statistical areas.

#### THE MODEL

**Blueprint:** The Oklahoma Turning Point Council is made up of over 50 different organizations and has been existence since 1998. General membership is open to community organizations, statewide organizations, and members at large. Members include representatives of political, economic, health, education, religious, communication, and recreational sectors as well as social welfare and non-profit, voluntary and other community groups. The Council's executive committee includes members from several county health departments as well as hospitals and other state organizations. There are four standing subcommittees: data, media, public/private financing, and human resource development. Staffing for the Council is provided by the Community Development Service within the Oklahoma State Department of Health.

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Funding for the Oklahoma Turning Point Council originally was from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Kellogg Foundation. Support now comes through a variety of sources, including state and federal funds, which allows change to occur at both the state and the community level. The Council has developed an implementation strategy for the Health Improvement Plan that serves as a framework on how to proceed with community collaboration. The plan includes several objectives toward increasing community collaborations such as the development of marketing tools and the provision of resources and information to local partnerships that will assist them in assessment, evaluation, and grant writing.

The Council has developed resolutions that promote state and local policies and encourages collaboration among organizations to deal with specific conditions and health-related issues. This has included resolutions that stress the importance of physical activity and nutrition by suggesting various solutions such as the community design of pedestrian and bicycle-friendly transportation systems as well as nutrition programs in schools with the collaboration of the State Board of Health. Resolutions have also been developed in arthritis prevention and education for adults to improve quality of life as well as to reduce health care costs. Additional resolutions include tobacco use and the reduction of exposure to secondhand smoke through the promotion of smoke-free policies in most public places and workplaces and the promotion of child advocacy in health care. In addition to resolutions, the Council has also developed an implementation strategy for health improvement, with goals and objectives in the areas mentioned previously.

Beyond the local level, the Council encourages collaboration among the state legislature; the Governor's office; the State Board of Health; the State Board of Education; the State Department of Health; the state's Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance; Council on Physical Fitness and Sports; and state professional associations.

The Oklahoma Certified Healthy Business Program is an initiative of the Oklahoma Turning Point Council. The Oklahoma Certified Healthy Business Program targets the workforce of small, medium, and large businesses in Oklahoma. The primary goal is to encourage Oklahoma businesses to provide health promotion and wellness activities and incentives for their employees.

The Certified Healthy Business Program is supported primarily through the volunteer efforts of the Oklahoma Turning Point Council partners. There are two paid professional staff from the Oklahoma State Department of Health who assist with the operations of the Certified Healthy Business Program. Marketing is primarily done through electronic means (website and e-mail), through mass mailings (coordinated by the State Chamber of Commerce), and through business newsletters. Mailing and printing costs are donated, and staff costs necessary for maintaining the program are provided by the

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Oklahoma State Department of Health. The program has support from key groups within Oklahoma, such as the State Chamber of Commerce, which volunteers resources.

The Certified Healthy Business Program provides recognition as a certified healthy business to those organizations that meet specific criteria. Awards are made based on the size of the business and number of criteria (wellness/health promotion activities) that the business is involved in. The certificates are signed by the Commissioner of Health, the chair of the Oklahoma Turning Point Council, and the director of the Oklahoma Academy for State Goals. Criteria for becoming an Oklahoma Certified Healthy Business were developed by the committee through a collaborative process. Businesses may apply as an Oklahoma Certified Healthy Business by completing the online application form. Businesses apply either online, or by mailing or faxing hard-copy applications. Certificates are presented yearly at the annual meeting of the Oklahoma Turning Point Council.

**Making a Difference:** The Oklahoma Certified Healthy Business Program is measuring its success by tracking the number of businesses that apply and become certified each year. The Program also maintains a database of wellness/health promotion activities offered by Oklahoma businesses and will track these activities each year to identify any trends or differences. As data on the type of wellness and health promotion activities businesses are providing employees is collected and analyzed, it will be made available to help other businesses in their employee health improvement activities.

One positive result in its first year of existence is that Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Oklahoma has agreed to form a consortium of health insurance companies in Oklahoma to look at reducing health care coverage premiums for those businesses that become certified through the Oklahoma Certified Healthy Business Program.

**Beginnings:** Oklahoma's public health system is very centralized as a result of how the Department of Health was formed through the historical actions of the state legislature and the categorical funding from federal sources. Centralization has had some positive outcomes, such as the extensive "brick and mortar" infrastructure that exists in the state; there are health departments in 69 of Oklahoma's 77 counties.

However, improvement in health status indicators has not been fully realized, and the need for community input is recognized. The 1999 State of the State's Health report concluded that the Board of Health and the Oklahoma State Department of Health cannot improve current health conditions alone. The report recognized that interventions will have to include local communities, neighborhoods, and families in the development and implementation processes. As a result, the system is reorganizing, and local and state health department staff are making additional effort to

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include community-specific needs, conditions, and concerns into decision making while preserving the core functions and responsibilities of the state in protecting public health. Such collaboration efforts are facilitated through the Oklahoma Turning Point Council. The Oklahoma State Department of Health understood that in order to improve the state's health status, it had to engage in collaborative efforts with community and business partners. Therefore, the State Health Department took the lead in securing the initial grant funding for Turning Point, and it continues to support Turning Point through state and federal dollars.

The Oklahoma Certified Healthy Business Program began September 2003 and was fully implemented in December 2003. It is currently ongoing. The original stakeholders in the program remain, and none have been added or dropped. The stakeholders consist of the Oklahoma Academy for State Goals, Oklahoma State Chamber of Commerce, McDonald's, BF Goodrich, Oklahoma State Department of Health, Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Oklahoma, New York Life, Integris Health, City of Ardmore, Oklahoma State University, Team Insurance, Kwikset, First Bank, and Southwestern Bell. Since the Oklahoma Certified Healthy Business Program has only been active for one year, program leaders anticipate additional stakeholders will be added.

**Challenges and Solutions:** The program is looking to attract new stakeholders and to increase the number of businesses that are interested in certification. Incentives for those who become certified are also being sought, such as reduced health coverage premiums for certified businesses.

## **PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION**

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