

## **COVID-19 implications on worksite wellness programming**

Renee A. Underwood, Southeastern Louisiana University  
Angela Wood, Southeastern Louisiana University  
Rylie Broussard, Southeastern Louisiana University  
Ralph J. Wood, Southeastern Louisiana University

This research sought to understand what, if any, implications the COVID-19 epidemic had on worksite wellness programming. Worksite wellness is the provision of health options by employers to their employees. The researchers postulated that the COVID-19 epidemic and sudden change of how and where employees were working would present both challenges and successes for worksite wellness programs. We used purposive sampling to assess selected Louisiana organizations with worksite wellness programs in place. We identified organizations through a combination of outreach to worksite wellness field experts known by the lead researcher from past years of working in the field, and the Louisiana Department of Health's Well-Ahead Louisiana WellSpot Designation Program (WAL). An organization lead at each organization participated in a Zoom interview with the lead researcher. Organizations were recruited and participated in the study between January 2021- April 2021. We used constant comparative analysis to analyze the qualitative data. The following themes were identified: 1) Relationship building among remote employees 6 (46%) 2) creativity in how to carry out program components 6 (46%) 3) increased physical activity and work life balance 6 (46%) 4) increased knowledge of health issues and mental health resources 7 (58%). There were both challenges and successes reported within these themes. The main finding from this research indicates a mostly positive experience for worksite wellness programs during the COVID-19 epidemic. This positivity can be seen in all four themes found in the study. The results were not without challenges. Challenges were reported primarily in relationship building and also in creativity for carrying out program components. Lessons learned from this study can provide ideas for how to create and continue a worksite wellness program outside of the normal face-to-face working environment.