

SOUTH CAROLINA HOSPITALS LEAD THE WAY IN WELLNESS

January 24, 2012 - Since the launch of the Working Well initiative in early 2011, South Carolina hospitals have made enormous strides in employee wellness and are slated to expand their wellness efforts even further this year. With a new grant allowing the Working Well initiative to extend into other worksites in 2012, the program has the potential to exponentially increase its impact on the health of South Carolinians.

In January 2011, the South Carolina Hospital Association received a \$1.6 million grant from the Duke Endowment and the chance to work with NC Prevention Partners' WorkHealthy America program throughout the state's hospitals to implement policy, environment, systems, benefits and incentives that support a culture of wellness and encourage healthy lifestyles among employees. The project focuses on chronic disease prevention through increased promotion of better health, including tobacco-free behaviors, better nutrition and increased physical activity.

"Working Well's focus on policy, systems, and environmental factors give our committed hospitals resources to look beyond the usual programming aspects of employee wellness like screenings, awareness campaigns, and education to a sustainable culture of wellness where the healthy choice is the easy choice," said Jen Wright, manager of the Working Well project.

To date, 41 hospitals (employing 67,218 hospital personnel) are participating in Working Well. The program has established nine hospitals as Centers of Excellence because of their innovative leadership, commitment to employee wellness and desire to improve the health of South Carolinians. Additionally, seven hospitals have reached Gold Star status for reaching the highest standard of excellence for an employee quit-tobacco system and three hospitals have received the Gold Apple award for creating and encouraging environments supportive of healthy eating.

"The momentum Working Well has gained among our SC hospitals in just one year is astonishing," Wright said. "Through my travels I see evidence of strong executive leadership and innovative strategies that are positively impacting the health status of our hospital workforce, regardless of hospital size or geographic location."

Over the course of the next two years, the Working Well campaign hopes to engage more South Carolina hospitals and broaden its positive impact. In 2012, the Community Transformation Grant awarded to South Carolina will allow for expansion of the initiative to general industry. Working Well will be introduced and then implemented in worksites throughout communities across the state of South Carolina in partnership with local healthy eating and active living coalitions.

"The Working Well Initiative is proving to be a key strategy in our efforts to improve population health in South Carolina," said Jim Head, Vice President for Policy and Education at the South Carolina Hospital Association. "Not only will participating hospitals realize cost savings and productivity gains from a healthier workforce, but they will also model best practices for other businesses and organizations in their local community."

In December, NC Prevention Partners recently released new maps detailing the progress of North and South Carolina hospitals in their wellness efforts. Visit www.ncpreventionpartners.org to see the maps and view how South Carolina hospitals have developed their emphasis on nutrition, physical activity and quit-tobacco systems over the past year.

To view the new interactive wellness maps, visit

<https://www.ncpreventionpartners.org/dnn/WorkHealthyAmerica/PreventionMaps/tabid/364/Default.aspx>.