



HELPING PEOPLE GROW

Putting people first with
Health Links™ and White
Construction Group



About White Construction Group

POPULATION

53 employees

INDUSTRY

Construction

RESULTS PERIOD

2017–2020



**CONSTRUCTION
GROUP**

OVERVIEW

White Construction Group (WCG) has been serving the Rocky Mountain Region as a full-service general contractor for over 35 years. WCG is dedicated to investing in its people. The company strives to build a healthy and safe work environment that best reflects the needs and interests of its workers.

IT'S A PEOPLE BUSINESS

Early in his career, WCG President Chris Haugen received the pivotal advice that construction is not a building business, it's a people business. "Since hearing that, it has always been our top priority to carefully consider how we treat our people," says Chris. Putting people first is the essence of Total Worker Health® (TWH), a holistic approach that seeks to integrate safety and health promotion as a way to improve the overall health of workers.¹

In 2017, although Chris knew that WCG needed a work culture that supported worker health and well-being, the company's programming was not reflecting this. At the time, WCG offered just a few health and well-being activities predominantly focused on safety. Tipping the scales toward safety is standard for the construction industry, but WCG wanted to do more.

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“The efforts may have been prescriptive in terms of safety procedures, but they were inadequate compared to a TWH approach,” says Chris. Leadership realized they could do more to promote the safety and support the health of their employees. “Expecting change from ideas devoid of leadership action is pretty futile,” Chris says. This acknowledgment is consistent with research showing the importance of leadership commitment to TWH strategies in small businesses.^{2 3}

HELP FROM HEALTH LINKS™

In its search for direction and support in revamping the company’s culture of health and safety, WCG decided to partner with Health Links. One of Health Links’ key strategies is to help organizations identify attainable action steps towards creating a safer and healthier workplace.

WCG met with their Health Links advisor to review their Healthy Workplace Assessment™ responses and benchmark scores. After determining areas for growth, their advisor recommended conducting surveys to measure the health needs and interests of employees. Involving employees throughout this process provides vital information to inform programming and fosters a shared commitment helping to “increase buy-in and participation”.⁴

PRIORITIZING MENTAL HEALTH

After gathering and reviewing employee surveys, health screenings, and worksite assessments, leadership was surprised to find that many employees were interested in receiving mental health education and resources. They were equally surprised employees were willing to open up about mental health. Despite issues being common, elements of the construction industry’s culture have been shown to impact workers’ willingness to discuss mental health as well as seek out help.^{5 6} The construction industry can be very hush-hush regarding mental health; as



Chris states, “it’s incredible to see that our people are comfortable enough to discuss issues like depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and suicide.”

Based on feedback, WCG’s wellness committee started expanding its mental health programming. WCG now provides stress management programs including free counseling through its employee assistance program. Additionally, the company is offering a workshop, Walking for Mental Health, which focuses on taking breaks and walking through nature as a way to help employees relieve stress.



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GROWTH AND PROGRESS

With the addition of this new programming, Health Links advised WCG to evaluate how successful these programs were at positively changing employee behavior and satisfaction. Evaluation measures the effectiveness of programs, which is vital to making informed decisions about the allocation of resources like time and money.⁷

Over the course of one year, employee participation in WCG’s health and safety programs increased by 9%.

WCG’s health and safety programming is now more closely aligned with their employees’ needs and interests which likely attributes to the increase in participation.



9%

Increase in participation

85%

Employee satisfaction



In addition, 85% of employees have reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the current programming.

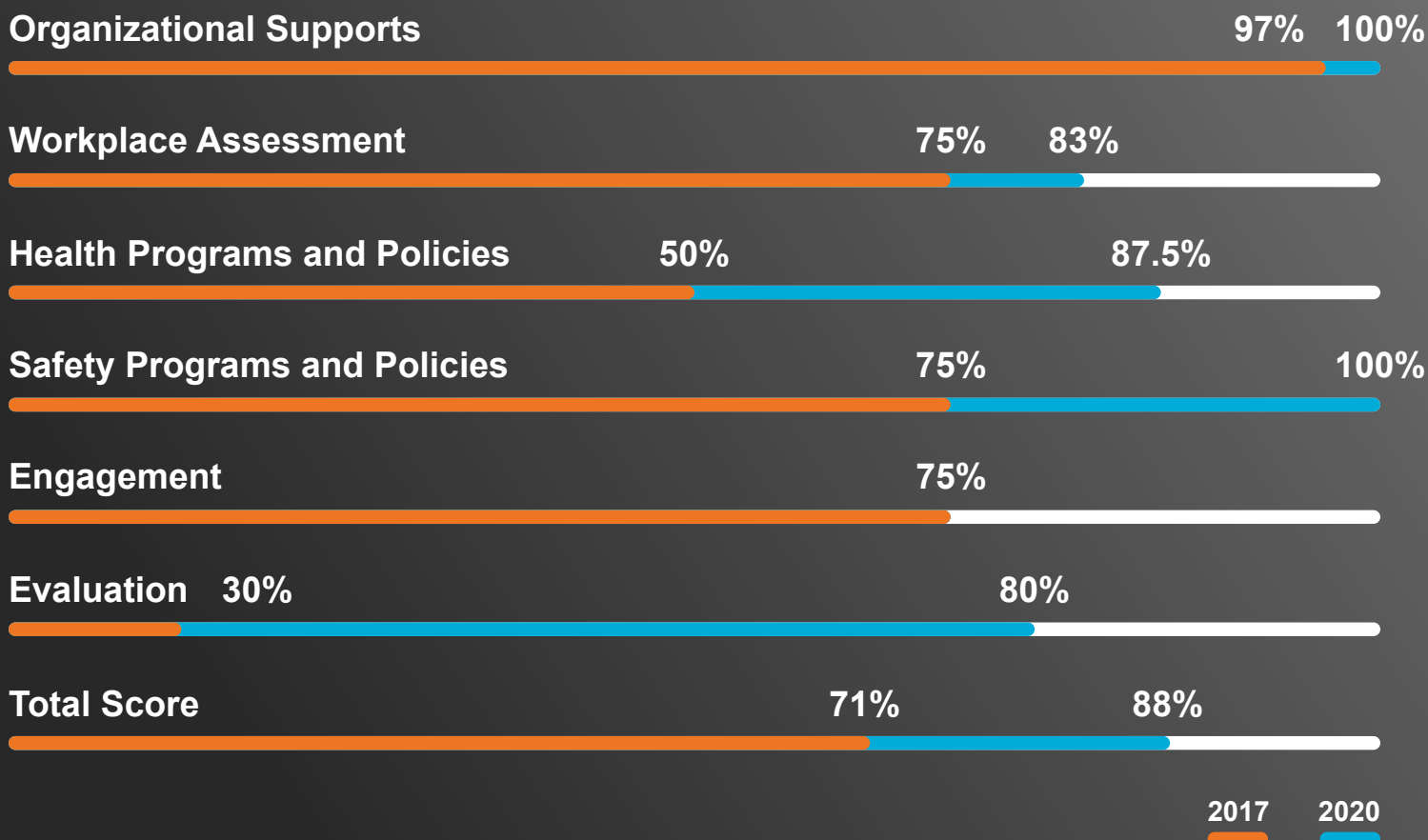
Chris has received feedback that the team “believes leadership cares about them and their families’ health and wellness”. By prioritizing employee interests, Chris feels that WCG has created an environment that fosters open and honest discussion about health, safety, and emotional well-being in the workplace. Since 2017, WCG has increased its Healthy Workplace Assessment score by 16 points making WCG a Certified Healthy Workplace

Leader™, the highest level of certification. By following evidence-based recommendations in planning, implementing, and evaluating programs based on its employees’ needs and interests, this company has made incredible strides in strengthening its overall health and safety programs.

Health Links Benchmarks

Change in Benchmark Scores and Total Healthy Workplace Assessment Score from 2017 to 2020

White Construction Group



SOURCES

¹ Total Worker Health. (2020). Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/twh/default.html>

² Schwatka, N. V., Dally, M., Tenney, L., Shore, E., Brown, C. E., & Newman, L. S. (2020). Total Worker Health Leadership and Business Strategies Are Related to Safety and Health Climates in Small Business. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 17(6), 2142. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17062142>

³ Shore, E., Schwatka, N., Dally, M., Brown, C. E., Tenney, L., & Newman, L. S. (2020). Small Business Employees' Perceptions of Leadership Are Associated With Safety and Health Climates and Their Own Behaviors. *Journal of occupational and environmental medicine*, 62(2), 156–162. <https://doi.org/10.1097/JOM.0000000000001789>

⁴ NIOSH (2016). Fundamentals of total worker health approaches: essential elements for advancing worker safety, health, and well-being. By Lee MP, Hudson H, Richards R, Chang CC, Chosewood LC, Schill AL, on behalf of the NIOSH Office for Total Worker Health. Cincinnati, OH: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. DHHS (NIOSH) Publication No. 2017-112 December 2016

⁵ American Society of Safety Professionals. (2019). Suicide in the Construction Industry: Breaking the Stigma and Silence. Retrieved from <https://www.assp.org/news-and-articles/2019/03/11/suicide-in-the-construction-industry-breaking-the-stigma-and-silence>

⁶ LaMontagne, A.D., Martin, A., Page, K.M. et al. (2014) Workplace mental health: developing an integrated intervention approach. *BMC Psychiatry* 14, 131. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-244X-14-131>

⁷ Guidelines for Implementing Integrated Programs. (2018). Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/twh/guidelines.html>



Health Links™ is a program of the Center for Health,
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 contact@healthlinkscertified.org

 1.833.616.0100

 13001 E. 17th Place
Building 500 B119
Aurora, CO 80045