



# A CULTURE OF ENGAGEMENT

Connecting people to passion  
with Health Links™ and the  
City and County of Denver



# About City and County of Denver



**DENVER**  
THE MILE HIGH CITY

## OVERVIEW

The City and County of Denver (CCD) is a multi-industry municipality with more than 14,700 employees across 20 departments and agencies. The CCD is committed to creating a culture that fosters engagement and empowers employees to make healthy, informed choices. It is the organization's top priority to offer competitive benefits and comprehensive health and safety programs for its employees. As the state capital's administrative body, the CCD strives to build a work environment that reflects Colorado's position as one of the nation's healthiest states.

**POPULATION**  
14,702 employees

**INDUSTRY**  
Public Administration

**RESULTS PERIOD**  
2017–2020



**HEALTHY  
WORKPLACE**

CERTIFIED  
PARTNER

## DIRECTION AND SUPPORT FROM HEALTH LINKS™

In 2017, the CCD's wellness team was brimming with ideas on how to improve health and safety, but they were in need of direction and support. According to Wellness Program Coordinator Lizzie Schoon, "We knew we needed help securing leadership buy-in and finding strategies for effective health communications." These aspirations correspond with two defining elements of Total Worker Health® (TWH); ensuring leaders demonstrate support for workplace health and safety and engaging workers in health and safety activities.<sup>1,2</sup>

Seeking direction, the CCD decided to partner with Health Links. They began by completing the Healthy Workplace Assessment™ which helps organizations measure their current progress toward achieving TWH. The Assessment, along with guidance from their Health Links advisor, brought to light gaps and areas of opportunity within the CCD.

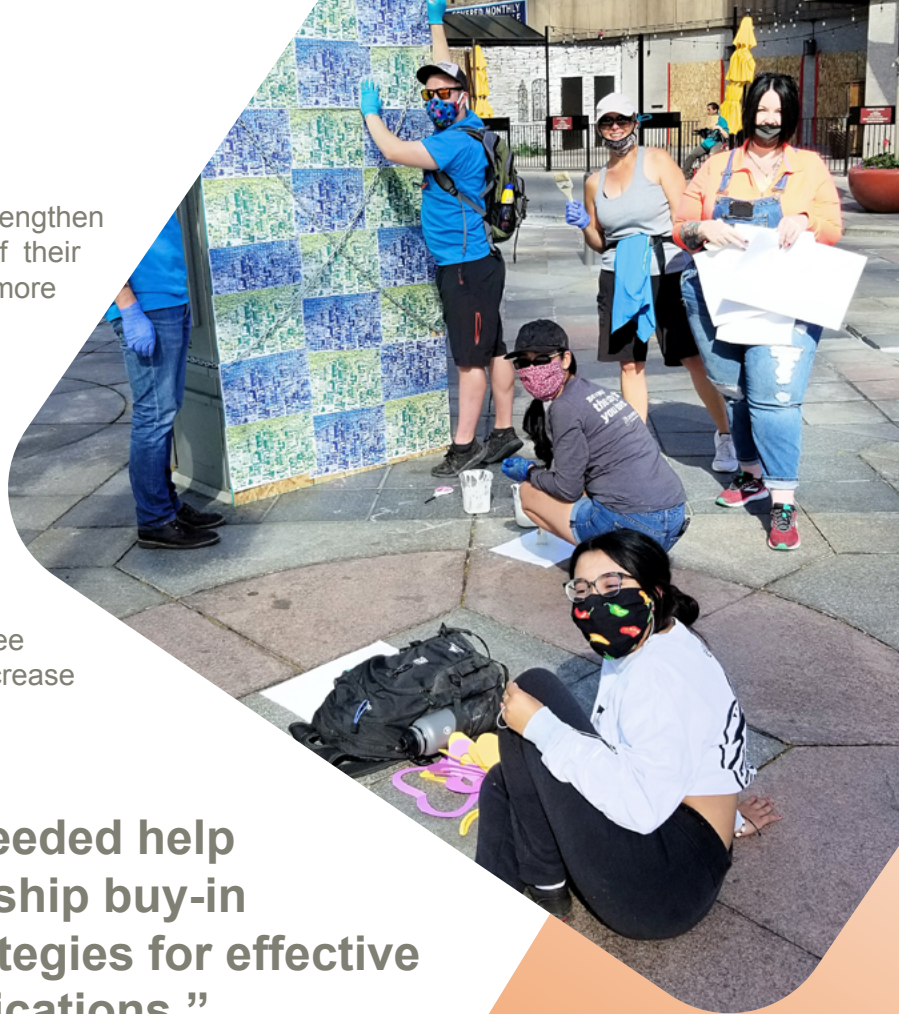
This laid the groundwork for the CCD to strengthen its culture of health and safety. By the end of their first advising session, the wellness team felt more organized and focused.

With guidance from its Health Links advisor, the CCD re-examined its employee engagement survey to identify relevant health and well-being questions and use employee responses to inform program changes. Conducting workplace assessments and responding to employee feedback contribute to more effective programs. This process helps determine employee needs and interests, improve engagement, and increase participation in health and safety activities.<sup>13</sup>

“We knew we needed help securing leadership buy-in and finding strategies for effective health communications.”

## FOSTERING LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT

The wellness team shared the results of the wellness questions with the CCD supervisors and senior leadership to highlight the connection between engagement and well-being. One unexpected finding Lizzie discussed with the group was how “employees felt that their well-being was better supported by their direct supervisors compared to the CCD’s senior leadership.” The CCD’s mid-level supervisors and managers were actively supporting employees which corresponds to research indicating that middle management plays a pivotal role in successful TWH programs.<sup>1</sup> The perceived gap in support between senior leaders and mid-level managers presented in the survey data inspired senior leadership to become more involved in the organization’s wellness program. Eager to become better workplace champions, top leaders began taking steps to make a more positive impact on their employees healthy, safety, and well-being.





## TAKING ACTION

The CCD has made several enhancements since they started collecting data on employee perceptions. All levels of leadership have worked to improve communication through openly supporting and participating in health and well-being programs.

Together, with the commitment from leadership, the wellness team revamped organization-wide health and safety communications. Driven by the data, the CCD's communications director began communicating more consistently with employees about health. Leaders became an integral part of spreading the word about specific health and safety programs. "When leaders show excitement, support, and even participate in a new program, it helps motivate employees," says Lizzie. This approach is consistent with research showing the importance of leadership commitment to promoting and supporting worker engagement.<sup>4 5</sup>

The wellness, communications, and leadership teams collaborated on the best ways to communicate with all the CCD employees. Examples include online newsletters, family-focused messages through mail, wellness portal blog posts, and wellness specific channels on Microsoft® Teams that provide daily health tips. By using strategic communication, the CCD is creating a stronger culture of health and safety.<sup>6</sup>

Leadership also invested in benefits and resources to strengthen the CCD's health and safety programs. The Health Links advising sessions helped the CCD determine what resources would best support employees, such as bringing in health and safety consultants; hiring agency-specific wellness coordinators; offering employee trainings; and providing paid time for employees to participate in health and safety programs.

## GROWTH & PROGRESS

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

The CCD expanded its reach by updating its online wellness portal resulting in over 1,000 more employees

9%

Increase in participation

accessing the portal in 2019. By improving communications and increasing its reach, the CCD helped ensure that all employees can access the information they need to successfully participate in workplace health and safety programs.

Also during this period, the CCD's organization-wide score for staff who report a good relationship with their supervisors increased by 5%.

"Data collection and evaluation have improved our team's strategic decision-making and inspired leadership to prioritize our peoples' health and well-being," says Lizzie. The improved leadership-employee relations positively impacted work culture.

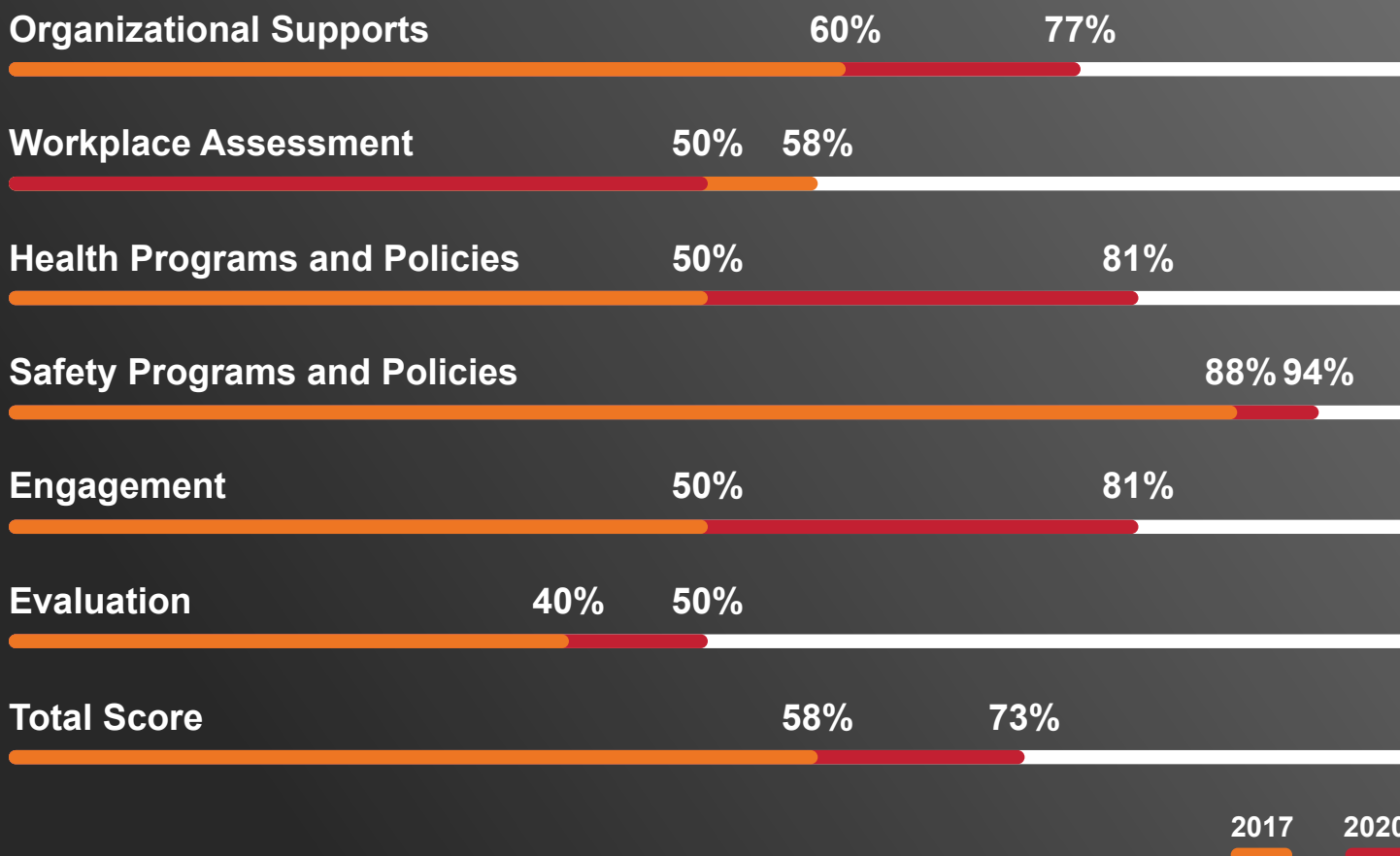
Positive relationships with supervisors increased by

5%

Since 2017, the CCD has increased its Healthy Workplace Assessment™ score by 15 points. Through working with Health Links and implementing its evidence-based recommendations, the CCD has made great strides in fostering sustained leadership buy-in and creating a more engaged and healthier workforce.

# Health Links Benchmarks

Change in Benchmark Scores and Total Healthy Workplace Assessment Score from 2017 to 2020  
The City and County of Denver



## SOURCES

<sup>1</sup> 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

<sup>2</sup> Total Worker Health. (2020). Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/twh/default.html>

<sup>3</sup> Robertson M, Henning R, Warren N, Nobrega S, Dove-Steinkamp M, Tibirica L, Bizarro A, CPH-NEW Research Team [2013]. The intervention design and analysis scorecard: a planning tool for participatory design of integrated health and safety interventions in the workplace. J Occup Environ Med, [http://journals.lww.com/joem/Fulltext/2013/12001/The\\_Intervention\\_Design\\_and\\_Analysis\\_Scorecard\\_\\_A.16.aspx](http://journals.lww.com/joem/Fulltext/2013/12001/The_Intervention_Design_and_Analysis_Scorecard__A.16.aspx).

<sup>4</sup> Sorensen G, Barbeau E [2012]. Steps to a healthier U.S. workforce: integrating occupational health and safety and worksite health promotion: state of the science. In: NIOSH. Research compendium. The NIOSH Total Worker Health program: seminal research papers. Presented at the Steps to a Healthier U.S. Workforce symposium, <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2012-146/pdfs/2012-146.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> 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>

<sup>6</sup> Kent, K, Goetzel, R Z., Roemer, E.C., Prasad, A, & Freundlich, N. (2016). Promoting Healthy Workplaces by Building Cultures of Health and Applying Strategic Communications, Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine: 58(2), 114-122. DOI: 10.1097/JOM.0000000000000629



**Health Links™** is a program of the Center for Health,  
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