Changing the Culture of Health Through Partnership
Mount Sinai Beth Israel Hospital

Mount Sinai Beth Israel Hospital is one of seven hospital campuses in the Mount Sinai Health System in the New York metropolitan area. The Labor Management Project's Workplace and Community Health Program supported the development of a Labor Management Wellness Committee and jointly-sponsored workplace wellness initiatives to establish a culture of health at MSBI.

The Background and Challenge
The workplace is an important venue for reducing risk factors for illnesses and injuries and preventing health problems through the design, implementation and evaluation of state-of-the-art programs and policies. Worksite interventions have been shown to improve health status, decrease healthcare costs, improve productivity, and impact patient care and satisfaction.

In 2015, the Labor Management Project’s (LMP) Workplace and Community Health Program (WCHP) established a union-management workgroup at Mount Sinai Beth Israel Hospital (MSBI) to guide the implementation of the National Diabetes Prevention Program (NDPP). About 100 MSBI employees who were at risk of developing diabetes took part in this worksite-based program. The majority (75 percent) of participants who attended at least four sessions lost weight and average weight loss neared three percent of starting body weight.

Following the success of the NDPP, the workgroup transitioned into a Labor Management Wellness Committee (LMWC) in January 2018 to oversee the development of a new workplace wellness program. The program’s goal is to establish a culture of health at MSBI, defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as “the creation of a working environment where employee health and safety is valued, supported and promoted through workplace health programs, policies, benefits and environmental supports.”

One of the LMWC’s first projects was a jointly-organized labor-management health fair held in May 2018. Health fairs at the workplace provide staff with access to screening services for hypertension, diabetes, high cholesterol and glucose, as well as educational materials to improve health status. Union members whose screenings reveal health problems receive follow-up services from National Benefit Fund (NBF) nurses, including phone calls and on-site nurse consultations at the workplace. Non-Union staff are encouraged to meet with their primary care physician or other health professionals (e.g., nutritionists) to help manage any health concerns.

Getting hospital employees to attend health fairs can be a challenge. At a 2017 MSBI health fair promoted through tabling and flyers, only 195 employees, including 125 Union members, attended and completed two or more biometric screenings. As a result, the LMWC aimed to boost staff participation at the May 2018 health fair.
The Solution

The LMWC secured a commitment from management to assist with release time for staff and partnered with the Union and management to design and implement a robust and multifaceted communications plan. The LMP’s WCHP team assisted the LMWC with the development and roll-out of this plan.

The communications plan included the following components:

- **Development of flyers.** LMWC members designed a flyer to function as a primary means of promoting the health fair. The flyer was distributed throughout the hospital by Union delegates and management.

- **Additional communication channels.** These included email blasts to all staff, text messages and robocalls to 1199SEIU members, announcements at weekly leadership meetings, and departmental rounding by Union and WCHP staff.

- **Engagement of accountable partners to ensure the distribution of materials and information about the health fair to co-workers.** These partners included delegates, managers, executive leadership, MSBI’s communications manager, and labor and management leads of the LMWC.

- **Frequent reminders.** Information about the health fair was conveyed to employees weekly for the month leading up to the health fair, then daily for the three days prior to and on the day of the fair.

The Results

The number of Union and non-Union MSBI staff who received at least two biometric screenings in May 2018 was substantially greater than in April 2017 (Figure 1). Overall attendance grew by 28 percent, from 195 to 249 employees. Most of this increase was due to a 42 percent jump in Union attendance, from 125 to 177 members. Non-union attendance remained relatively flat.

Enhanced communication increased attendance, mainly for Union members. For future health fairs, non-Union staff should also be contacted by text and/or robocalls to increase participation.

![Figure 1: Number of Employees Receiving Two or More Biometric Screenings at MSBI Health Fairs](image-url)
The WCHP surveyed health fair attendees to determine how they heard about the event. Email reached the largest proportion of employees—more than a third of both Union and non-union staff (Figure 2). Text messages and robocalls, only used to target 1199SEIU members, were important methods of contacting this constituency. Non-Union staff were more likely to hear about the health fair through a flyer or a manager than their Union counterparts. Most respondents who selected “other” communication channels indicated that they heard about the fair informally through an 1199SEIU contract administrator or WCHP field coordinator.

The committee received encouraging feedback from employees during promotional activities, which suggested greater interest in the health fair than in previous years when less intensive communications were utilized.
Positive Feedback
Sponsors and LMWC members praised the hard work put forth to make the event successful in achieving higher attendance, engagement and participation than in previous years. Photos from the event capture some of the energy and enthusiasm displayed by staff and executive leadership, including Jeremy Boal (President, Mount Sinai Downtown and Executive Vice President and Chief Clinical Officer, Mount Sinai Health System), who stopped at the fair to sample bean salad provided by MSBI’s chef Antonio Vidal.

A health fair’s success should be measured by more than just the number of attendees. For MSBI’s LMWC, the fair’s success is also gauged by its contribution to developing a culture of health by providing:

- Leadership support for and commitment to the health and wellbeing of all MSBI employees; and
- Employee recognition and encouragement to take part in wellness initiatives.

In 2019 and beyond, the LMWC will continue to work in partnership with MSBI to create an environment that will provide long-term resources for all employees that will lead to healthier lifestyles.