Swift Worksite Assessment and Translation (SWAT)

Implementation Guide

CDC

SWAT Implementation Guide

This Implementation Guide explains how to conduct a SWAT assessment for a workplace health promotion program. It begins with an overview of the SWAT methodology, describes what can be learned about workplace health promotion programs, and then guides you through each of the key steps in the SWAT process: (1) a site visit consisting of interviews, an environmental assessment, and secondary data collection; (2) data analysis; and (3) reporting.

Table of Contents

Overview of SWAT

CDC developed the Swift Worksite Assessment and Translation (SWAT) method to rapidly assess and identify promising practices in workplace health promotion programs. The SWAT approach was developed as a middle-ground evaluation method that aims to be business-friendly while being solidly based in good evaluation practice. The SWAT evaluation method is intended to be used to assess worksite programs individually (e.g., one-at-a-time), not to compare worksites against one another.

SWAT differs from other types of evaluation because the SWAT process is not designed to establish firm conclusions about the effectiveness of specific workplace health practices but rather to identify practices that appear promising and merit additional, more rigorous study.

CDC developed the SWAT methodology to investigate emerging health promotion practices in worksites – “home-grown” interventions that are reputed to be successful in achieving positive health effects. The SWAT method was designed specifically for evaluating organizations we defined as small- (<300) and medium- (<5,000) sized because of the paucity of data in these settings. More detailed information about the SWAT methodology, its development, and examples of how it has been used can be found in the following publications. [INSERT CITATIONS/LINKS TO 2 PCD ARTICLES]

Conducting a SWAT Assessment

The SWAT assessment is designed to identify promising practices in workplace health promotion programs. Workplace health promotion programs are often comprehensive in that they aim to reach employees through a variety of ways, such as workplace policies, benefits, environmental changes, and programs and services available for employees, spouses, and dependents. However, each company and its employees is unique and the strategies used to address employee health will vary from company to company based on the resources available, needs and interests of management and employees, and health issues that are priorities. Therefore, the SWAT methodology aims to assess workplace health programs occurring across the following areas:

1. Health-related programs and services
2. Health-related policies
3. Health benefits
4. Environmental support
5. Community linkages
6. Workplace governance

<u>1. Health-related Programs and Services</u>

Programs and services are opportunities available to employees at the workplace or through outside organizations to start, change, or maintain health behaviors. Programs and services can be 1) informational approaches – directed at changing knowledge or attitudes about the benefits of and opportunities for healthy lifestyles; or 2) behavior or social approaches – designed to teach employees the behavioral management skills necessary for successful adaptation and maintenance of behavior change. Examples of workplace health programs and services to promote healthy weight might include:

- Classes or seminars on health topics such as fitness or nutrition
- Weight loss programs such as Weight Watchers that offer counseling and education
- Exercise classes
- Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)
- Providing chronic disease self-management tools
- Emails or newsletters with health information

Questions you might ask during a SWAT assessment include "*What kind of health promotion activities is available to employees at the workplace to promote healthy weight? Who is eligible to participate in the activities? How many employees participate in these activities? What has been the response from employees about the activities?"*

<u>2. Health-related Policies</u>

Health-related policies are formal written statements that are designed to promote employee health. Supportive workplace health policies affect large groups of workers simultaneously and make adopting healthy behaviors much easier. They can also create and foster a workplace culture of wellness. Examples of policies to promote healthy weight include:

- Policies requiring healthy foods to be served at company meetings and events
- Policies allowing for flex time to exercise or attend health programs

Questions you might ask during a SWAT assessment include *"What kind of health-related policies to promote healthy weight does your workplace have? Has the workplace health program had an impact on policies related to healthy weight?"*

3. Health Benefits

Health benefits refer to health insurance coverage conditions and other services or discounts regarding health provided as part of an employee benefits package. Examples include:

- Health insurance coverage for preventive services and screenings
- Discounts and/or subsidies for fitness facility memberships
- Coverage for tobacco cessation and/or nicotine replacement therapy
- Incentives such as gift certificates, cash, paid time off, reduced health insurance premiums or prizes for participation in health promotion programs or achieving individual or group health goals

Questions you might ask during a SWAT assessment include *"What are the types of benefits that employees receive to promote healthy weight? What incentives are provided to employees to participate in the health programs?"*

4. Environmental Support

Environmental support refers to the physical factors at and nearby the workplace that help foster employee health. Examples of environmental support include:

- On-site fitness facilities, walking/running trails, basketball hoop, or open green space for exercise
- Healthy foods available in an on-site cafeterias, snack shops, or vending machines
- Showers and changing rooms on-site
- Bulletin boards, kiosks, intranet or other communication mechanisms that provide information on the company workplace health program, workplace or community opportunities for healthy weight programs or services, or general healthy weight promotion information

Questions you might ask during a SWAT assessment include *"What does the workplace look like? What type of setting are employees working in? What space at the site is or could be used for healthy weight activities?"*

5. Community Linkages

Community linkages are partnerships with organizations in the surrounding community to offer health-related programs and services to employees when the employer does not have the capacity or expertise to do so or provide support for healthy lifestyles to employees when not at the workplace. Examples include:

- Negotiating formal agreements with area fitness facilities to provide discounted memberships to employees
- Working with local hospital, health department, or area medical staff to provide health education and/or screenings at the workplace
- Publicizing health education opportunities or groups available in the community (e.g., smoking cessation, diabetes education, health fairs or clinics, and exercise opportunities).
- Publicizing local farmer's markets to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables.

A question you might ask during a SWAT assessment is *"What type of partnerships do you have with organizations in the local community or nearby surrounding area to promote healthy weight to employees?"*

6. Workplace Governance

Workplace governance refers to the infrastructure at the workplace to lead and support employee health programs. Examples include:

- An employee wellness council or committee
- A member of the senior management team to champion workplace health activities
- A workplace health coordinator
- On-site occupational health nurses
- Appropriate collection and use of health information for planning and evaluation purposes

Questions you might ask during a SWAT assessment include "*Who are the key staff involved in the workplace health program? What percent time do the key staff work on health promotion? Who are champions of employee healthy weight activities? What evidence is there to show that the health promotion program is having an impact on employee health?*"

Planning and Conducting a Site Visit

At the heart of the SWAT process is planning and conducting a site visit. A ***site visit*** is a set period of time (typically between 1 to 2 days) spent in-person at a worksite conducting structured meetings with key employees involved in the workplace health program and observing the work environment. Visiting a worksite in-person offers a valuable opportunity to gain a more personal understanding of a company's workplace health program and its impact on the work environment and employees.

Finding a time when key participants are available will take careful coordination with the workplace you are visiting. Make sure to identify a contact at the worksite that can help identify staff availability and schedule times for employee interviews and an environmental assessment, particularly if you are evaluating the program but are employed outside the company. Choose a contact who is most closely involved in the workplace health program. This may be a health program coordinator, an occupational health nurse, or an employee in Human Resources. Maintain close contact with this person to explain the types of individuals you would like to meet with and what you would like to observe at the worksite to make sure that the site visit is efficient and successful.

Planning for a Site Visit

- Outline the goals and objectives of your site visit with your contact. Describe what the SWAT process involves and what you are looking to learn from your visit and discussions with employees.
- Appropriate planning for a site visit allows you to develop a good working relationship with your company contact and begins to build trust. The trust developed will be important in getting open and honest answers to the questions you will ask.
- Share information ahead of time with employees that will be involved in the site visit so that critical questions are answered before the site visit, such as the purpose of the site visit, who is visiting, and the types of questions being asked. Click here [INSERT LINK] for an example document you can share with your contact that overviews the topics to be discussed during the site visit.
- Work closely with your contact and plan a detailed agenda in advance describing who you will be interviewing, when the interviews will occur, when you will conduct the environmental assessment, who will accompany you, and the amount of time needed to brief or update senior leadership (if relevant). It is helpful to build in some extra time to deal with any unexpected changes to the agenda.
- Work with the contact to get as much background information on the company, the worksite policies and procedures, and any health-related data, before attending the site visit.

- If you are from outside the company, you may want to bring information with you about your organization to share with managers and employees.
- Discuss with your contact the expectations and plans for follow-up after the site visit.

A site visit should look to uncover the companies existing efforts and future interest in workplace health programs. The key components of site visits are **interviews with employees**, **assessing the worksite environment,** and **collecting secondary data about the workplace health program**. In the next sections, these components are described in more detail.

<u>Site Visit Interviews</u>

Site visit interviews allow you the opportunity to meet face-to-face with managers and key health program staff at the workplace to gain personal insights about the company's healthy weight program, corporate culture, key decision makers involved in implementing the healthy weight program, and the effect of the program. The important steps in conducting site visit interviews are:

1. Determining which employees to interview;
2. Determining the types of information you wish to learn during the interview; and
3. Developing structured protocols of questions to guide the conversation.

<u>Determine Which Employees to Interview</u>

During the site visit, you will want to meet with employees who were key to making decisions about and then implementing the employee healthy weight activities. These types of employees include representatives of:

- **Senior Management** (e.g., Chief Executive Officer, President, Vice-Presidents, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Operations Officer, Operations Manager, Department or Division Managers, HR Manager or Director).
- **Workplace Health Program Manager or Director** (e.g., Wellness Coordinator, Occupational Health Nurse, HR Manager or Director).
- **Key Workplace Health Program Staff**.
- **Staff or Vendor(s) involved in data collection or analysis of the health progra**m.
- **Employee Wellness Committee** (if applicable).

Although it may not be possible to speak with all individuals in each of the above categories, it is important to try to get representatives from each of these groups. If necessary, conduct interviews over the telephone if individuals are not available to meet in-person during the day(s) you are at the worksite.

When conducting interviews, consider the following:

- Reserve a conference room or private area to conduct the interviews to ensure employees' confidentiality and their comfort with speaking openly.
- Use a combination of individual and group interviews to maximize the time allotted.
- When conducting a group interview, make sure the employees all represent the same group or function. Discussions often flow more freely if group interviews are conducted with three to seven employees.
- Before beginning, introduce yourself, inform the interviewee(s) about the purpose of the interview, and generally describe the types of topics to be discussed. Let the person(s) know that if they are not comfortable discussing the topics, then they are allowed to leave.
- Prepare a Participant Fact Sheet/Consent Form to explain and ensure interviewees' confidentiality and privacy, as well as to provide contact information for any questions they may have following the interview.

- If you want to audiotape the conversations, make sure to ask and receive approval from the employees in the interview to do so. Also, let the employees know how the tapes will be used. In workplace settings, it is often common that employees or management would prefer not to have discussions audiotaped.

<u>Determine the Type of Information You Want to Learn During Employee Interviews</u>

Employee interviews can provide valuable insights into the types of health promotion strategies that have been implemented at the workplace, what impact they have had on employees' health, and recommendations for improvement. How much you learn during the interviews depends upon the types of questions you ask. It is important to consider which topic areas may be best addressed with different types of employees. Below are examples of key topic areas you will want to consider discussing:

- Employee's roles and responsibilities at the workplace
- Perceived benefits and goals of the workplace health program
- Current workplace healthy weight activities
- Program eligibility (e.g. who could participate in the workplace health program – employees, spouses, dependents, retirees)
- Extent of participation in workplace healthy weight activities
- Perceived champions for implementing a workplace health program
- Effective forms of communication to publicize the workplace health program to employees
- Barriers and facilitators to implementing the workplace health program
- The resources, financial and non-financial, necessary to implement the workplace health program
- Sources of data or information about the effects of the workplace health program

<u>Develop Structured Interview Guides</u>

Structured interview guides help facilitate conversations with employees. They are designed to include a number of questions to address specific topic areas such as those listed above. Key considerations for developing interview protocols are:

- Begin with an introduction that explains who you are and what you hope to learn from the interviews.
- Interviews with individuals can often be conducted within 30 minutes; discussions with groups of workers are often useful to limit to 1 hour. It may, however, be important to allow 1.5 to 2 hours for discussions with a workplace health program manager or director. Develop your protocols keeping time limits in mind.
- Avoid closed-ended questions that lead to yes/no responses and instead use open-ended questions to gather more detail. Include probing and follow up questions if necessary.
- Consider sharing the questions in the guides with interviewees before meeting, so they can prepare thoughtful responses.

Examples of interview guides for different types of employees can be found in the following links.

- **<u>Senior Management Interview Guide</u>** [INSERT LINK]
- **<u>Workplace Health Program Manager/Director, Key Program Staff, and Data Collection/Analysis Staff</u>** **<u>Interview Guide</u>** [INSERT LINK]
- **<u>Employee Wellness Committee Interview Guide</u>** [INSERT LINK]

Environmental Assessment

An environmental assessment is an opportunity to tour and observe the workplace to understand more about the setting employees work in and the physical factors at and nearby the worksite that support or hinder employee health. Examples of the types of physical factors supporting employee health that an environmental assessment can be used to observe include:

- Setting
  - Overall site layout – number of buildings (freestanding or connected), square footage (internal), acreage (external)
  - Meeting and multipurpose rooms
  - Grounds and parking lot
- Communication about Health & Wellness
  - Signs/bulletin board postings about health and wellness
  - Information kiosks
- Fitness Environment
  - On-site fitness center including types and condition of equipment
  - Accessibility for bikes/other forms of transportation (e.g., bike racks)
  - Outdoor physical activity options (e.g., walking paths, running trails)
  - Nearby community fitness facilities
  - Shower/changing room facilities
  - Stairs/elevators
- Occupational Health Clinic
  - Staffing
  - Hours of operation
  - Facilities
- Nutritional Environment
  - Cafeteria hours and selections including price
  - Vending machine location(s) and selections including price
  - Break rooms/eating areas
  - Nearby restaurants and food retailers
- Community resources
  - Sidewalks
  - Hospitals/pharmacies
  - Parks and recreational areas

Click here [INSERT LINK] for a tool that can be used to conduct an environmental assessment at the workplace.

Key things to think about when conducting an environmental assessment include:

- It is often helpful to have an employee accompany you to provide insights into their workplace (e.g. information about how often bulletin boards are updated, information about snack and drink machine vendors, etc.).
- In most cases, it will be necessary for an employee to accompany you for safety purposes. Depending on the workplace, you will need to comply with all safety regulations (e.g., wearing protective clothing and equipment).
- There may be limitations on areas within the workplace that you can access due to intellectual property or proprietary information concerns. Be respectful of that if you are not part of the company.
- If you are assessing a workplace that operates multiple shifts, it may be helpful to conduct the environment assessment at different times throughout the working day. The environment may be different at night than during the daytime shifts.
- You may also want to take pictures, if allowed, to emphasize a point or provide visual detail in a report. Make sure to ask for approval from the company before taking any pictures.

Collecting Secondary Data

Secondary data are sources of information about the workplace health program that have been produced by or collected and analyzed by the workplace or an outside vendor. Examples of secondary data include:

- Demographic information about the workplace employees. Click here for a form that you can give to worksites to complete prior to the site visit [INSERT LINK TO WORKFORCE COMPOSITION GUIDE]
- Aggregate participation data for the workplace health program
- Data the workplace has collected on the effects of the workplace health program (e.g., on weight loss and other biometric measurements such as percent body fat, BMI, blood pressure, and cholesterol). Click here for a guide you can give to worksites to help them provide you information about outcomes [INSERT LINK TO INDIVIDUAL OUTCOMES DATA].
- Workplace health program materials (e.g., flyers, handouts, brochures, etc)

Secondary data are important to the SWAT assessment because they can be used to supplement the interviews and environmental assessment. For example, during interviews you may learn about the types of employees who participate in the workplace health program, but having demographic information can give you a sense of how representative these employees are of the entire company. Also, during interviews individuals may speak highly of the program, but any data the worksite may have collected can give you a better picture of whether the program is actually having an effect on employees who participate in it.

Limitations of Site Visits

It is important to note that site visits have limitations. Keep in mind the following:

1. Information and opinions offered during employee interviews may not be representative of the entire worksite population. And interviews conducted in one worksite location may not be representative of another worksite within the same company.
2. The information from interviews is only as good as the source of the information. Only accurate and credible information will allow for sound assessment of workplace health activities.
3. An environmental assessment may not be representative of the typical work environment. There may be something about the time you visit that is different than the average work day.

Data Analysis and Reporting

Data analysis is the process of synthesizing all of the different data collected during the site visit and any follow-up interviews. In conducting the analyses, one strategy you can use is to compile a table with each of the interview guide questions and the respective responses from the interviews (if applicable since not everyone answered each question) and look across the data to identify common themes. You may also want to use qualitative software packages such as Nvivo or AtlasTI to help you organize the data.

When you complete the data analysis, you will want to summarize the findings in a site visit report. The ***site visit report*** provides detail on the contexts of the worksite and the community, program components, program participation, and evidence for program effects on weight and health. It also includes recommendations for program improvement, which can be developed based on the SWAT Interpretive Assessment Checklist [INSERT LINK], a tool to help develop feasible suggestions that build upon the program's successes. For an example of an outline of a site visit report, click here [INSERT LINK TO SITE VISIT REPORT TEMPLATE].

Keep in mind that the audience for the site visit report is the program manager and other key staff you interviewed. To help those who may not be familiar with certain industry terms, provide definitions of key terms wherever possible and limit the use of jargon by using lay terminology.

It is useful to share the site visit report with the workplace health program director or coordinator in order to verify the accuracy of information and get their feedback. You can do this by sending an electronic or hard-copy of the report, explaining that it is a draft, and asking for feedback within 2-3 weeks to allow time for the individual(s) to review and comment. After the feedback is provided, incorporate or address any changes into the report and send a finalized version to the workplace. In addition, you may want to consider offering technical assistance to the worksite after the site visit report is finalized to help program staff implement recommendations they would like to implement. Examples of technical assistance include:

- Phone calls and/or in-person meetings to discuss and provide feedback on program staff ideas
- Providing staff with resource materials and tools to help them move forward