The CDC Worksite Health ScoreCard: An Assessment Tool to Promote Employee Health and Well-Being

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Background

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Worksite Health ScoreCard (CDC ScoreCard) is a free and publicly available tool designed and validated to help employers assess the extent to which they have implemented evidence-based health promotion interventions or strategies at their worksites to improve the health and well-being of their employees.[1] The current version of the CDC ScoreCard has 154 yes/no questions that address a range of health promotion and disease prevention strategies, including lifestyle counseling services, physical/social environmental supports, workplace policies, and health plan benefits across 18 core topic areas (see Table 1). Each question represents an individual intervention, strategy, or action an employer can put into practice at the worksite.

The CDC ScoreCard scoring system reflects the relative impact of proven health promotion strategies. Each strategy has a point value that indicates its level of impact on health outcomes and the strength and breadth of evidence supporting the strategy's effectiveness, from "good" (1 point) to "better" (2 points) to "best" (3 points).

Development

The CDC ScoreCard was initially published in 2012. The CDC's Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention developed the CDC ScoreCard in collaboration with the Emory University Institute for Health and Productivity Studies, the Research Triangle Institute, CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Workplace Workgroup, and an expert panel of representatives from federal/state government, academia, and the private sector. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Healthy Worksite Program (NHWP) tested and updated the CDC ScoreCard in 2014 to include 4

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additional workplace health topics (lactation support, occupational health and safety, vaccine-preventable diseases, and community resources). The CDC ScoreCard was updated again in 2019. The CDC's Workplace Health Program in the Division of Population Health collaborated with the Institute for Health and Productivity Studies at Johns Hopkins University, IBM Watson Health, and national experts to add 4 new topics (cancer, alcohol and other substance use, sleep and fatigue, and musculoskeletal disorders).

Each update followed an identical process for development, reliability, and validity testing that was conducted in 2 phases.[2,3] Phase I included a comprehensive literature review of previously cited and newly published research studies and an environmental scan of other instruments to examine the evidence base for all topics and questions. CDC held subject matter expert panel meetings organized by topic to rank the strength of the scientific literature evidence for each question and reach consensus on whether to include/exclude questions, the weighted scoring of questions, and their wording and relevance to employer-based workplace health programs. In phase II, the CDC ScoreCard was pilot tested with employers to measure the instrument's validity and reliability. Two knowledgeable employees (eg, worksite wellness practitioners, human resources specialists, or benefits managers) from each worksite independently completed the draft CDC ScoreCard. Then, CDC examined the percentage agreement between the 2 survey responses from each worksite. Telephone interviews and site visits were conducted with a random sample of worksites that varied in size and industry type to verify responses and examine questions with low respondent agreement to determine whether there was something inherently flawed about the questions that would require revision or possible deletion. Final revisions were made to items to improve comprehension and ease of use, while maintaining the content and evidence of the original questions, and the CDC ScoreCard was scientifically cleared at CDC and then released.

Administration

The CDC ScoreCard is available as either an online questionnaire on the CDC website or as a downloadable portable document format (pdf) that users can complete by hand and self-score.[1] CDC recommends forming a small team of employees representing different organizational units to complete the survey. A collaborative approach will allow for more accurate responses, increase ownership and involvement among the team, and decrease effort for any single-team member. Completion takes approximately 60 minutes.

Once a CDC ScoreCard is submitted online, employers immediately receive access to their score and a series of benchmarking reports in their account dashboard. The online CDC ScoreCard keeps a record of all submitted CDC ScoreCards, so employers have a historical account of their organizational capacity for implementing workplace health promotion initiatives. The system sends a series of automated reminder messages to employers approaching the 1-year anniversary of their last submission to encourage them to complete a new CDC ScoreCard. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that employers complete the CDC Scorecard annually to track progress and evaluate organizational capacity building (ie, identifying gaps for opportunities to implement new programs).

Benchmarking

The CDC ScoreCard questionnaire generates 4 main reports for users. The first is a *Summary Report* that lists scores overall and by topic (294 total possible points). The second is a *Detailed Report* showing answers and point values for each question (strategy) by topic. Each of these reports includes yearly benchmark comparisons between multiple worksites within the same organization (ie, sibling worksites), a single worksite against all other worksites of similar size, and a single worksite against all other users of the CDC ScoreCard system regardless of size. The *Interventions in Place Report* shows the number of good, better, and best interventions in place at a worksite overall and by topic (eg, nutrition) versus the number that are not currently in place. For employers with multiple worksites, the final *Scores for Employer Report* allows users to generate customized reports comparing any or all their worksites by overall score, topic-specific score, and year. Employers can view all reports within the online system or download and share them with leadership and the workplace health team for planning, engagement, or reporting progress.

Resources and Guidance

The CDC website offers user guides and manuals as well as video tutorials to assist employers in establishing online CDC ScoreCard accounts, completing the assessment, and interpreting their results.[1] Information icons within the online system connect users to resources for action and implementation tools for all the topics in the CDC ScoreCard. They can also use the CDC Workplace Health Resource Center website to find credible information and tools in the public domain to develop or expand workplace health programs, such as comprehensive workplace health frameworks and models underlying the CDC Score-Card, and case studies featuring CDC ScoreCard users.[4–6]

Employers submitting CDC ScoreCards through the online system also have access to the *Action Planning Tool*, a 3-step process to assist worksites in identifying and prioritizing intervention strategies and next steps to improve their workplace health program. The process results in a tailored *Action Plan* containing annual program goals, objectives, and activities that will help each employer achieve their overall health goals.

The CDC ScoreCard in Action

Since 2012, more than 2800 employers from 48 states have submitted more than 3900 CDC ScoreCards. Half of the employers using the CDC ScoreCard have 100 or fewer employees. Fifty-three percent of employers are private, for-profit businesses, 28% are government, and 19% are nonprofit organizations. The CDC ScoreCard has also been widely used in its "pen-and-paper" format, although these off-line uses are not tracked or included in benchmarking data. In 2019, more than 700 CDC ScoreCards have been submitted by 484 employers in 41 states. The largest proportion of these submissions have come from government agencies (42%). Small employers (100 or less employees) again represent the highest percentage (36%) of users.

Several research projects have employed the CDC ScoreCard to measure organizational capacity and workplace health infrastructure over time. Employers who participated in the

CDC NHWP used the CDC ScoreCard at baseline with a follow-up 18 months later. Significantly, more evidence-based interventions and more comprehensive worksite health promotion programs were in place after participating in the NHWP. Employees also made gains in physical activity and nutritional behaviors, but not employee overweight.[7] Another NHWP study looked at workplace culture of health and perceived organizational support and lifestyle risk using the CDC ScoreCard and employee survey data.[8] Of the 7 culture of health measures included (eg, leadership and coworker support; environmental, policy, and programmatic supports; employee engagement; and strategic communication), only leadership predicted both perceived organizational support and lifestyle risk. Employers participating in the CDC Work@Health Program also completed preand post-assessments using the CDC ScoreCard as part of their training and technical assistance program. The program intended to help employers develop knowledge and skills to build a comprehensive workplace health program. One year after training, employers had significantly increased the number of evidence-based interventions in place (47.7 vs 35.5, P < .001).[9] Additional employers, such as Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, have also independently confirmed the CDC ScoreCard as a valid tool for measuring organizational capacity and change.[10]

The CDC ScoreCard has also informed the development of national surveillance tools; been used to report data on workplace health programs, practices, and policies in worksites across the nation; and has been culturally adapted for international use in Brazil (Portuguese), the United Arab Emirates (Arabic), and Korea (Korean).[11–14]

In summary, the CDC Worksite Health ScoreCard is one of the few current, evidence-based, and validated tools for employers to assess and build effective worksite health promotion programs, both nationally and internationally.

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Table 1.

CDC Worksite Health ScoreCard Topic Areas.

Topic Area[a]	Number of Questions
Organizational Supports	25
Tobacco Use	8
High Blood Pressure	6
High Cholesterol	5
Physical Activity	10
Weight Management	4
Nutrition	14
Heart Attack and Stroke	12
Prediabetes and Diabetes	6
Depression	7
Stress Management	7
Alcohol and Other Substance Use	6
Sleep and Fatigue	6
Musculoskeletal Disorders	7
Occupational Health and Safety	9
Vaccine-Preventable Diseases	7
Maternal Health and Lactation Support	7
Cancer	8
Total	**154**

Abbreviation: CDC, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[a]The CDC ScoreCard also includes 20 unscored questions related to worksite demographics and community engagement.