



CASE STUDY

LOCATION: **Arenac County, MI**

ORGANIZATION: ***Vantage Plastics***

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The de Beaumont Foundation’s IMPACT project aimed to enhance employee retention and reduce absenteeism at Vantage Plastics by fostering partnerships between the business and public health sectors. The initiative integrated community health workers (CHWs) into the company’s onboarding process, supporting new hires by addressing their health and social needs early on. This approach included tracking qualitative data from CHWs to understand the reasons behind employee turnover and implementing a new electronic medical record (EMR) system to improve data collection and analysis.

Day-to-day activities involved CHWs engaging with employees to identify factors affecting their well-being and work conditions. They conducted health screenings, provided resources, and facilitated connections to primary care providers. The team also produced a monthly newsletter to share insights and updates on the project’s progress.

The “why” behind these efforts was to create a supportive and healthy work environment, ultimately improving employee retention and reducing absenteeism. The project sought to demonstrate that integrating public health principles into business

operations could lead to better employee outcomes and organizational success. However, the project faced several challenges. While there were initial successes and significant cost savings, recent data indicated issues with retention rates. These challenges were influenced by factors beyond the project’s control, such as internal company policies, economic conditions, and cultural differences between the company’s locations. The retention rates started to level off, prompting the need for a deeper analysis of the underlying issues. The team also encountered difficulties with inconsistent data trends and the need for a longer data collection period to analyze long-term benefits. There was concern that

if the data did not reflect positive trends, it might be challenging to keep the business partner engaged.

Looking forward, the team plans to focus on sustainability and scaling the project. They emphasized the need for structured guidance and legislative support to ensure long-term success. They discussed the importance of building a strong business case to secure continued funding and support from Vantage Plastics and other potential partners. They also planned to explore alternative ways to continue data collection and evaluation to strengthen their case for the project’s impact on employee retention and well-being.

Partnership Team Overview		
Partner Organization	Focus	Partnership Type
Central Michigan District Health Department (CMDHD)	Provides public health services and oversees the CHW program’s integration.	Health Partner
Michigan Health Improvement Alliance (MiHIA)	Facilitator and convener (not a direct service provider) focuses on addressing health inequities through relationships and data.	Health Partner
Molitor International	Consultation firm contracted for employee orientation and training enhancement.	Consultant
The WELL Outreach	Nonprofit associated with Vantage Plastics, focuses on community outreach and employee wellness.	Community Partner

Project Focus		
Phase	Description	Impact
Initiation	The project began with the establishment of a multi-sector team including Vantage Plastics, Michigan Health Improvement Alliance (MiHIA), Central Michigan District Health Dept. (CMDHD), and The WELL. The focus was on addressing employee retention issues at Vantage Plastics by integrating a Community Health Worker (CHW) to address Social Determinants of Health (SDoH) during employee orientation and initial employment phases.	This phase successfully set a clear project scope and mission, enhanced collaboration among partners, and laid the groundwork for data collection and employee support mechanisms.
Development	The project evolved to include more structured meetings, clearer roles for HR involvement, and expanded data tracking and integration into corporate processes at Vantage Plastics. It also included revamping onboarding processes to incorporate CHW insights directly into employees' initial experiences.	Increased organizational commitment and visibility, with substantial process improvements that led to better initial retention results and integrated health supports. Media coverage and community engagement also grew during this phase, helping to elevate the project's profile.
Future	Plans for sustainability and expansion included potential adjustments based on comprehensive data reviews and the integration of health planning at a strategic level within Vantage Plastics and other partnering entities. Considerations were made for new funding models and the expansion of CHW roles across different company sites.	

Partnership Team

Core Team: Includes representatives from MiHIA, CMDHD, The WELL Outreach, and Vantage Plastics' HR department.

Extended Team: Involves additional partners like Molitor International for training and organizational culture enhancements.

Methods

Data Collection: Tracking qualitative data from CHWs, employee turnover, and health outcomes.

Program Integration: A CHW embedded within Vantage Plastics to facilitate health screenings and connect employees to necessary health resources.

Stakeholder Engagement: Regular meetings with HR and top management to align organizational practices with employee health initiatives.

Outcomes

Employee Health Improvements: Early interventions have been set up to address health issues from the point of hire.

Cultural Shifts in Workplace: Initiatives aimed at improving the workplace environment and employee satisfaction.

Data-Driven Decisions: Using collected data to refine practices and better address employee needs.

Challenges

- 1. Inconsistent Data Trends:** Despite initial positive results, recent data indicated issues with employee retention rates leveling off, making it difficult to demonstrate the project's impact convincingly.
- 2. Factors Beyond Control:** Internal company policies, economic conditions, and cultural differences between Vantage Plastics' locations affected employee retention and were beyond the project's direct control.
- 3. Need for Longer Data Collection:** The team identified the need for a longer period of data collection to understand and demonstrate the long-term benefits of the interventions fully.
- 4. Sustaining Business Partner Engagement:** Concerns arose about maintaining Vantage Plastics' commitment to the project if the data did not consistently reflect positive trends, posing a risk to ongoing support and funding.

Successes

- 1. Initial Cost Savings:** The project achieved significant cost savings, with an estimated \$175,000 saved in the first six months due to improved employee retention and reduced absenteeism.
- 2. Improved Onboarding Process:** The integration of CHWs into the onboarding process provided new hires with early support, helping to address health and social needs, which contributed to a more supportive work environment.
- 3. Positive Cultural Impact:** The project fostered a positive cultural shift within Vantage Plastics, enhancing the relationship between the company and public health entities, and improving perceptions of the public health's role in the workplace.
- 4. Data-Driven Insights:** The initiative provided valuable data-driven insights into the factors affecting employee retention, allowing for targeted interventions

Additional Project Summary Information

Project Start: In February 2023, Vantage Plastics, a thermoforming plastics company, partnered with Central Michigan District Health Department (CMDHD) to implement a public health CHW in their facility.

Notable Wins

- Increased trust between Vantage Plastics & CMDHD.
- Received the Michigan Public Health Directors Award, awarded to only one public health department each year in Michigan.
- Established CHW billing for Medicaid/ Medicare starting January 1, 2024.
- Quick implementation of services for employees.
- Positive data results in retention, needs met, and timeliness of care provided.
- Increased relationships and networking opportunities.

Lessons Learned

- 1. Communication:** Communication is the linchpin to facilitate care, and without it, it can drive disconnection. Understanding expectations and roles is crucial.
- 2. Employee Care:** Care for employees means pivoting expectations and managing increased needs and employees.
- 3. Growth:** Growth will equate to uncomfortable change and vulnerability. Managing changes in business relationships and navigating resources for employees' specific needs are critical.

Next Steps

- Expand CHW Integration: Considering expanding the CHW program to other facilities and possibly adjusting the model based on initial data findings.
- Sustainability Planning: Exploring sustainable funding models and partnerships to continue the CHW program beyond the initial grant period.
- Policy Engagement: Engaging more with policymakers to secure support and recognition for the health initiatives being implemented at Vantage Plastics.

Future Plans

- Strategic Workshop: Conducting another Strategic Workshop in May to refocus efforts for the next 12-24 months.
- Anticipating further projects and initiatives under the umbrella of childcare access and quality, recognizing the importance of ongoing collaboration and action in addressing critical community needs.