

2016-2017 Assessment Final Report

Department: Watkins Health Services (WHS)

Animal Therapy and Stress Reduction

Introduction

Assessment Project Description

Watkins Health Services Animal Therapy for Stress Management events are targeting students to provide stress management education in the form of animal assisted therapy along with tips and tools to for stress management. Though the goal of these programs is aimed at stress reduction, research shows animal therapy can also help with varies categories relating to mental health and wellness including: Depression, anxiety, trauma, etc.

Service/Program Student Learning Outcome(s)

Students participating in Animal Therapy for stress management programs will be able to...

- Recognize the connection between stress management and academics.
- Identify Stress management strategies to better manage personal health.
- Use stress information, services, and/or resources to better manage personal health

Population/Sample:

Convenient sample of 1,012 undergraduate and graduate level KU students attending Animal Therapy for stress management events. We had an 18% response rate with 182 student responses.

Assessment Method(s):

At each animal therapy for stress management event students swiped their KU ID card, so we could capture contact and demographic information. Upon swiping cards students were handed an information piece on stress management strategies. Stress kits containing tips and tools were also available for students if desired, but not every student received one. An electronic copy of the survey was then distributed via email to all students who attended the

2016-2017 Assessment Final Report

Department: Watkins Health Services (WHS)

event two weeks after the original event date and a reminder email was sent a week after that.

Summary of Key Findings/Results

- 95% of KU students reported feeling happier after interacting with therapy dogs.
- 84% of KU students reported feeling more relaxed after interacting therapy dogs.
- 82% of KU students reported feeling calmer after interacting with therapy dogs.
- 83% of KU students reported feeling less stressed after interacting with therapy dogs.
- 76% of KU students reported WHS stress reduction programs and resources helped them to better manage stress throughout the week.
- 85% of KU students reported planning to continually engage in stress management activities.
- 89% of KU students agree that by engaging in more stress management activities they are more likely to achieve their academic goals.
- 99% of KU students would like to see AT events continued and 81% of those students would like to see more of them.
- Themes for top stress management strategies used by students since the event (*note these are all a part of the education piece*):
 - Physical activity
 - Animal interactions outside of AT programming
 - Better time management
 - More sleep
- Themes for top reasons stress management is helpful in achieving academic goals:
 - Less stress positively impacts School performance
 - Less stress increases productivity
 - Less stress positively impacts emotions (felt calmer, happier, more positive, etc.)

All assessment questions WHS was hoping to collect information on were answered and all Student learning outcomes reached through these responses on the survey.

Conclusions

Impact of Assessment

2016-2017 Assessment Final Report

Department: Watkins Health Services (WHS)

Stress is the number one academic impediment for KU students so WHS is dedicated to better helping students manage stress with programs and events. Through this assessment, we are able to identify if these program efforts positively impact our students stress management strategies and how students are/aren't using them. We also understand more about what types of strategies students are using regarding stress management and how these strategies impact academics. Lastly, we have identified that students want to not only see these events continued, but they would like to see more of them. In the additional comments, ideas for expansion include: animals in WHS, animals in the classroom, and animals available for individual visits.

Lessons Learned

During this assessment process, we encounter a variety of difficulties relating specifically to the KU ID cards swipe devices. Here were some of those difficulties:

- Problems uploading information on Rock Chalk Central to pull email addresses.
- Lost a set of roughly 200 students through the conversion process in excel.
- One card reader was broken and had to be replaced.
- Had events that card readers didn't make it to in the preparation of event materials.
- Because Peer Health Education volunteers operated readers we had some issues with swipes occasionally as new volunteers were operating devices.

Additionally, we rely on a local non-profit to provide therapy dog teams at our events. We had one event with no teams in attendance.