

## Memorandum of Understanding

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and

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This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) clarifies the role and responsibilities between **Elizabeth A. Wade (Liza)** and **Karina Perez Marconi** to conduct a pilot test of a health promotion program with 10 participants who are employees of ANTEDOTUM.

This MOU also clarifies the nature of the proposed health promotion program, “Stress Reduction Program”, that will be tested in the practicum within the Capstone course (IHED 641). Based on the results of the pilot test, a revised MOU will be created to clarify roles and responsibilities and outline the program that will be implemented beyond that point.

This MOU is in effect from March 22, 2021 (date of first contact) until August 10, 2021 (last day of the semester).

## Background

Stress has been identified as the leading health concern for the employees of ANTEDOTUM. Risk factors stem from the remote business structure. They include lack of definition to work hours and conflicting demands from work and home.

Research indicates that being “always on” and accessible through technology while working remotely leads to the blurring of work and non-work boundaries (Russell, 2019). It has been determined that the risk factors specific to the work culture of ANTEDOTUM include the lack of definition of their work hours due to the 24/7 blurring of accessibility from working remotely and lack of work-life balance from conflicting demands of work and home (WHO, 2020).

## Purpose

The purpose of the pilot test is to determine if the proposed program is a good fit for ANTEDOTUM. The goal is to decrease the stress levels of the employees through increasing the awareness of stressors and providing sample solutions to mitigate them.

- **Target Population:** The target population of the pilot program is the employees of ANTEDOTUM. For the purposes of this MOU employees are defined as those persons on direct payroll not to include part-time or contact workers.
- **Methods of Assessment:** The methods of assessment will be conducted virtually. This will include: 1) a baseline survey to assess existing knowledge, behaviors, and needs; 2) data collection for absenteeism and turnover rates; 3) interviews with CEO & VP for further assessment; and 4) measurement stress levels and work-life balance at baseline and at the conclusion of the program.
- **Objectives:** The objectives for the stress reduction program will be customized with SMART objectives for stress reduction that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time bound.
  - **Objective 1-** Raise awareness about the need, process, and benefits of implementing a stress reduction plan among the employees of by 90%. This will be measured by comparing the employee scores at baseline survey to exit survey.
  - **Objective 2-** Increase knowledge of stress triggers by 75% among the employees of ANTEDOTUM. This will be measured by comparing employee scores at baseline survey to exit survey.

- **Objective 3-** Increase amount of involvement in stress reducing initiatives among the employees of by 50%. This will be measured by comparing employee self-reported activities at baseline to exit survey.
- **Objective 4-** Reduce stress related measurements among the employees of ANTEDOTUM by 25% after six months of program implementation. This will be measured by comparing perceived stress at baseline survey to exit survey.
- **Evaluation Plan:** The evaluation will use the summative approach. This approach can be used to measure outcomes after completion. The evaluation components are as follows:
  - **Comparative Data-** the evaluation will be centered on a set of outcomes from the pilot and will come at the end of the pilot program. It will use comparative data from assessments at baseline and at the conclusion of the program and from human resources statistics measurements.
  - **Logic Model-** a logic model will be used which highlights cause and effect by creating a flowchart that summarizes key elements of the “Stress Reduction Pilot Program”. The elements of the logic model will communicate the resources, activities, outputs, and outcomes.
  - **Credible Evidence-** evidence will be gathered for the evaluation using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitative data collections will consist of a survey both before and after the pilot program and structured interviews with Karina Perez Marconi. Quantitative data collection will company records of employee sick days.
  - **Justify Conclusions-** according to WHO, stress can damage an employee’s health and the work performance. If the outcomes of the evaluation can prove that stress has been reduced and work-life balance increased within the time frame of the pilot program then it can be argued that the program works.
  - **Ensure use of evaluation findings-** the findings of the evaluation will be shared with Karina Perez Marconi. The findings will be sent via email as a report and discussed in a Zoom meeting.
- **Outline of proposed program content:**

The stress management program will be designed with the current ten top level executives of ANTEDOTUM in mind.

- **Work-Life Balance Pledge-** written pledge will be provided to each employee to sign and will be placed in their human resources file. Research indicates that being “always on” and accessible through technology while working remotely leads to the blurring of work and non-work boundaries (Russell, 2019).
  - 1) **The Right to Disconnect-** This concept provides each employee with the provision that it is their right to keep “office hours” despite working from a home office and having 24/7 access to electronics. In the document the employee will declare what their regular operating hours will be. An example would be “Monday through Friday, 8:00 am – 5:00 pm”.
  - 2) **The Right to Lunch Hour-** This concept ensures that each employee has the right to enjoy a full one-hour lunch away from work related electronics.
  - 3) **The Right to a Weekend-** This concept respects the time the employee has to enjoy their personal life outside of work understanding that they will be re-energized when they return to work at the beginning of the next week.
  - 4) **The Right to a Vacation-** This concept ensures that the employee uses all allocated vacation days. It will be encouraged by the company to take one whole week at a time for optimum rejuvenation.
  - 5) **The Right to a Wellness Day-** This concept embraces the idea that the employee gets a paid day off for self-care. This can be defined by the employee to include the annual physical, a spa retreat, a day trip, etc.

#### ➤ **Zen Zone on Zoom-**

The stress reduction program will be highlighted by monthly half-hour Zoom sessions. Each session will feature a different guest host with expertise on a topic targeted to reduce stress. The sessions will be designed to be live and interactive. However, they will be recorded for those who miss the session or wish to review. The pilot program will be launched with Session 1, *Feng Shui for Home Office*. The next two sessions will be selected from 2-6 as follows:

- 1) **Session 1- Feng Shui for Home Office:** Employees will be introduced to the concept of “Qi” and the auspicious placement and color of furnishings and décor.

The goal is to create a harmonious flow in the home office to decrease stress and increase productivity.

- 2) **Session 2- Boss the Clock:** Employees will learn to recognize what habits they have that cause distractions and log how much time is “wasted” by them. Facilitator will recommend tips to overcome common distraction from working at home. The goal is to reduce the stress of distractions and increase productivity.
- 3) **Session 3- Setting Boundaries:** Employees will learn how to visualize the boundaries of the virtual workplace. The goal is to “unblur” the distinction between work and home and embrace the right to disconnect.
- 4) **Session 4- Laughing Lab:** Studies show that laughing increases endorphins and reduces stress. Employees will be encouraged to laugh. The goal is to reduce stress and promote a sense of well-being.
- 5) **Session 5- Chair Yoga:** The benefits of yoga are widely recognized. Employees may be surprised by how effective chair yoga can be for stress reduction. The goal is to learn enough poses that the employee can use them while working in his/her home office.
- 6) **Session 6- Vision Board for Stress Reduction:** Building upon the concept of visualization, vision boards are widely accepted to offer benefits of visual self-talk. Since a vision board should focus on how a person wants to feel, the employee will learn to create a board to help them feel more stress free.

- **Marketing and Communication**

- **Email-** A daily quote on wellness to keep positive reinforcement top of mind.
- **Text-** Once a week each employee will get a “Wellness Wednesday” text from Wellness Program Manager with a tip for reducing work related stress.
- **Slack.com-** Monthly posts on the ANTEDOTUM team platform with information about benefits of reducing stress from Wellness Program Manager.
- **Care Package-** A monthly wellness box will be shipped to each employee with a gift from ANTEDOTUM. The gift will tie-in to the topic of the monthly Zen Zone on Zoom session.

- **Timeline.** The structure of the timeline will follow a GANTT format. The visual presentation will make it easy for the team to see where projects stand. Access will be granted to the CEO and VP of Sales. It will be placed on an ANTEDOTUM OneDrive and updated by the Wellness Program Manager as tasks get completed.

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## **Roles and Responsibility**

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### ***Karina Perez Marconi agrees to do the following activities:***

- 1) Host Zoom meetings on a weekly basis with Liza Wade and any additional parties she deems beneficial to the wellness dialog;
- 2) Provide feedback to Liza Wade on program submissions via email and/or on Zoom;
- 3) Promote wellness program to the ANTEDOTUM team by participating in the initiatives;
- 4) Select the topics for the two sessions to follow Session 1 from the list provided; and
- 5) Supply materials for the execution of the wellness initiatives.

### ***Liza Wade agrees to do the following activities:***

- 1) Attend Zoom meetings on a weekly basis hosted by Karina Perez Marconi;
- 2) Conduct two surveys: a preliminary survey before the pilot program is initiated and a second survey once three Zoom sessions take place;
- 3) Interview Karina Perez Marconi and other top-level executives as needed;
- 4) Create a Work-Life Balance pledge and brochure for ANTEDOTUM;
- 5) Conduct a minimum of three Zoom sessions with a stress reduction topic;
- 6) Ask participants for feedback on materials and content, including care package and marketing materials, after each Zoom session is conducted;
- 7) Provide Karina Perez Marconi with items to review before each Zoom session. These items may include items for the care package, marketing materials, and relevant questions; and
- 8) Present the results of pilot program via email as a report and discuss in final Zoom meeting of MOU period.

### ***Katherine Smith, MUIH Capstone Instructor, agrees to do the following activities:***

- 1) Meet with Karina Perez Marconi for an initial introduction to the practicum by telephone or web conference.

- 2) Be available for additional communication as needed with Karina Perez Marconi;
- 3) Review materials developed by Liza Wade to ensure principles of health promotion planning and adult learning principles are followed in the design of the pilot session;
- 4) Review of the final report summarizing the pilot experience.

This agreement may be amended at any time with the mutual consent of the parties.

## Contact Information

Katherine Smith, MPH  
Maryland University of Integrative Health  
7750 Montpelier Rd, Laurel, MD 20723

Elizabeth Wade Date: 5/8/21

Elizabeth A. Wade



Date: 5/7/21

Karina Perez Marconi

## References

Russell, S. (2019). How remote working can increase stress and reduce well-being. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/how-remote-working-can-increase-stress-and-reduce-well-being-125021>

WHO. (2020). Occupational health: Stress at the workplace. World Health Organization. 19 October 2020. <https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/occupational-health-stress-at-the-workplace>