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## ONLINE WORKPLACE PROGRAM HELPS PEOPLE CUT SUGAR CONSUMPTION

CHARLOTTE, VT – In the past year and a half, over 2,000 Vermont school employees have taken an online program aimed at reducing how much sugar they consume, and the results are impressive: 96% report being successful in cutting back on their sugar consumption, and 95% anticipate going forward with a sugar-minimal lifestyle.

The Vermont Education Health Initiative (VEHI), the health plan that touches all of Vermont's public school employees, has been offering two online programs through their wellness program, *Rethinking Sugar* and *Breaking Free from Sugar*. Program participants learn the science of what sugar does in the body to cause so much harm, and then gives them the skills and tools to cut back. These programs are just one part of a comprehensive wellness program aimed at keeping Vermont's school employees healthy and happy.

"The sugar courses have opened people's eyes to what's really in their food and helped them make great changes," says Gillian Pieper, Health Promotion Specialist for the VEHI PATH Program. "It's pretty exciting to see the results and feel all the buzz around the content."

There's no doubt about it, sugar and refined carbohydrates are part of the Standard American Diet (SAD). And there's also no doubt that it's not good for us. Sugar is linked to heart



disease (the #1 killer in the U.S.), dementia, cancer, and diabetes, just to name a few of the many chronic diseases it is associated with.

But cutting back or quitting can be challenging, partly because it is added to so many things (74% of packaged foods in the supermarket have added sugar), and partly because it is woven into our social and emotional lives, as well as the biological responses that cause cravings.

The first course, *Rethinking Sugar*, is a two-week program with researched-based information that helps people understand what sugar actually does in the body that causes so much harm. The second course, *Breaking Free from Sugar*, guides people through a 3-week no-added-sugar challenge, that helps participants navigate detox symptoms like headaches.

The programs were created by Andrea Grayson, Ed.D., a public health communications consultant and part-time faculty member in the Masters of Public Health program in the Larner College of Medicine at the University of Vermont. When she finally overcame her own sugar/carb addiction, Grayson used her experience creating curricula to create the courses to help others.

"Health research is increasingly showing that sugar leads to disease and early death because it causes inflammation, insulin resistance, and metabolic damage," says Grayson.

"Sugar is also one of the most highly addictive substances we consume by virtue of the way it lights up our brains with pleasure. Just like people hooked on other addictive substances, like alcohol and tobacco, those of us who eat too much sugar often need help breaking the addiction with tools and support."



## Create Change Lab

To learn more about bringing Rethinking Sugar and Breaking Free from Sugar to your organization, contact Dr. Andrea Grayson at [andreagrayson.com](http://andreagrayson.com).

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