

HOW TO GUIDE – IMPLEMENT A WORKPLACE WELLNESS PROGRAM

A comprehensive worksite wellness program raises health awareness among employees. It can help to increase their knowledge about important health concerns, encourage them to consider healthier behaviors, and provide them with a supportive environment, from top management on down, to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyle changes.

Key components of a successful program are *planning, implementation, and evaluation*.

Conduct an Organizational Assessment:

The first step in developing your wellness/health promotion program is to understand your organization and how health promotion will fit into the current structure. It is best when employees are internally motivated to be healthy. However, sometimes employees are stuck in unhealthy habits and they need help adopting and maintaining healthy behaviors. By researching your organization's history with similar programs and eliciting feedback from co-workers, you can find the best solution for your organization.

Successful wellness programs are designed to meet the needs and interests of the employees. The information you need to get from a survey depends on the scope of your program. Keep the following hints in mind when developing a survey:

- Ask mostly closed form questions, especially if you will be sending the survey to a large number of employees. Closed form questions provide specific choices and are easy to tabulate.
- Invite comments, suggestions and recommendations, or ask open-ended questions at the end of the survey. Open-ended items are more difficult to summarize.
- Include a brief explanatory cover letter with the survey with the signature of the company president. Make sure to include a statement about confidentiality and anonymity.
- Ask a group of representative employees to review the survey before it is distributed. Their review will help determine if the questions are understandable and inoffensive.
- Include demographic information at the beginning, or end of the survey (gender, age, shift, site, department, etc.).
- Conduct a random drawing for a valued incentive item for all those who returned the survey to increase the response rate.

When considering who should get the survey, a simple rule is if you have fewer than 500 employees, everyone should receive one. The public relations benefit of everyone receiving a survey can be significant. For organizations with over 500 employees, a sample of the work population from each department will suffice. A sample saves on costs and time.

Obtain Senior Management Support:

Support from management is essential to building a successful wellness program. Visible senior management support is one of the most vital factors in the success of a worksite health promotion program. Senior management executives are responsible for making sure that the

organization meets its objectives. They can provide additional assistance by helping you to link your health promotion objectives to business outcomes, thereby positioning health promotion as a fundamental part of the organization.

It is important to create support and excitement for the program from all levels of the corporation including upper management, mid-level management, and grass-root employees.

The challenge for any health promotion coordinator is convincing senior management about the potential value of health promotion to the organization and conceptualizing how health promotion initiatives can impact the organization in a meaningful manner.

Getting support from management is crucial to the success of the program. The higher the response, the more valid and reliable the results. A minimum response of 40 percent to 50 percent is good.

Senior Management can support in different ways:

- Involvement in the planning process
- Distribution of funding for the wellness program
- Support for time given to the wellness program
- Participation in wellness events
- Leadership by management, such as the distribution of a letter of support for the program.
- Send senior management a letter requesting their support
- Be flexible with employee schedules to accommodate wellness activities

Establish a Wellness Committee:

Forming a wellness committee is a critical first step in organizing your company's wellness program. The purpose of the wellness committee is to plan, promote, and implement the program. The committee establishes continuity, motivation, and broad ownership of the program as well as provides an excellent vehicle for communication.

When deciding who should be on the wellness committee, think about what groups of individuals will be helpful to the program and what groups of individuals the program will affect. Consider appointing the following people/departments to your committee*:

- Top management within your organization
- Union representatives
- Human resources department
- Employee assistance program
- Information technology
- Communications
- Health and safety department
- Employees interested in health and wellness

Once you establish a wellness program, the committee's size and meeting schedule may change. Still, no fewer than four members should meet at least quarterly so the group - and the wellness program - does not fade away.

Ask employees what they are interested in, and what needs they have. People are more willing to participate and support wellness efforts if they are involved in the decision-making process. Review the sample employee survey provided below for ideas on how to involve your employees.

Building a successful worksite wellness program requires staff time as well as money. Some larger organizations may spend 20 hours per week for three to six months preparing all the steps prior to launching a worksite wellness program. A wellness committee can be anywhere from four to 10 people meeting monthly. Develop SMART goals so committee members and employees know what is expected. Utilizing an evidence-based tool (such as the CDC Health Score Card) is very helpful to prioritize.

Community Partners & Collaborations:

The ability to get support from external sources can help you minimize the time it takes to get your program up and running. Rather than create resources from scratch, you may join the Wellness Partners programs such as Well@Work (Bureau of Public Health Division of Health Promotion Public Disease Well@Work Healthy Workplace Initiative (HWI), Wellness First (Thomas Health) or AHA – American Heart Association (Check. Change. Control) and take advantage of the professional workshop materials, references, pamphlets, brochures, toolkits and program ideas they have already developed. Once you join, their health education team will provide you with the support and resources, tailored to meet the needs of your organization.

- Assessment and identification of your employee population's modifiable health risks
- Coordinate on-site wellness programs that target your employees' specific health concerns
- Host health fairs or provide periodic on-site preventive health screenings
- Conduct seminars on a variety of health topics;

Other Support Resources:

Organizations such as the American Cancer Society, the American Lung Association, the American Diabetes Association, and your local health department or hospital may also be able to assist you with ready-made programs to help get you started and provide their toolkits at no cost.

Tips:

- Develop activities based on your plan goals addressing the specific needs of your employees. Focus on those topics that are of greatest interest to your employees and the greatest needs of your organization. Avoid topics with narrow appeal.
- Keep it simple. Design the program so it is easy for the employee to understand and track.
- Integrate a combination of activities to include awareness, educational, and behavior elements.
- Select activities in which every employee can participate.

Steps:

1. Conduct an organizational assessment (survey staff on their health)
 - a. Research Questions
 - b. Use Tools such as Constant Contact, Survey Monkey or Survey Gizmo
 - c. Employee Feedback
2. Obtain Management Support
 - a. Share the survey results
 - b. Provide data on ROI
 - c. Show status on reduction in health care cost and absenteeism
 - d. Involve in planning process
3. Establish a Workplace Wellness Committee
 - a. Senior Management
 - b. HR
 - c. Employees from various departments interested in health & wellness
4. Obtain Employee Input
 - a. Ask closed questions
 - b. Conduct Random drawings
5. Obtain External Support from community partners in various sectors:
 - a. Health
 - b. Government
 - c. Business
 - d. Faith
 - e. Community
 - f. Education
 - g. Labor
6. Develop Goals and SMART objectives
 - a. Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time bound
7. Design and Implement Program
 - a. Create a detailed plan
8. Selective Incentives
 - a. Gift Cards
 - b. In-Kind Donations
9. Evaluate Outcomes
 - a. Performance Measures
 - b. Logic Model
 - c. Pre & Post Test
 - d. Feedback Surveys

When developing a comprehensive workplace wellness plan, make sure that it consists of a variety of awareness, lifestyle change, supportive environment programs, policies and activities that target risk behaviors, and the needs and interests of the employees. It will be important to review and revise existing policies.

Suggestions:

- **Challenges.** Activities that focus on practicing a desired behavior that continues for 4 weeks and focuses on specific topics (such as physical activity, nutrition, or stress management).
- **Learning experiences.** This includes seminars, videos, and classes.
- **Behavior changes (such as smoking cessation).** You may or may not offer interventions at the workplace. However, you should encourage employees to make lifestyle changes that they want to make even without an external incentive.
- **Education on disease management.** For example, support and education groups and collaborates with agencies that focus on diabetes, high blood pressure, etc.
- **Learning new skills.** For example, cooking, Tai Chi, or maybe even CPR and first aid
- **Preventive biometric screenings** such as blood pressure, cholesterol, and glucose.

Incentives:

Providing employees with incentives, allows them to enjoy saving money on things they do every day and drive healthy behaviors, including but not limited to:

- Completing a health assessment or risk screening
- Joining fitness club/gym
- Checking in on social media with a selfie to promote a wellness activity
- Losing/Maintaining a healthy weight
- Reducing blood pressure, glucose and cholesterol levels
- Quit smoking
- Attending Lunch & Learn sessions on chronic disease or wellness topics
- Being a part of a physical fitness challenge or campaign

The best way to do this is to provide small incentives, such as gift cards, to randomly selected employees who successfully complete different aspects of a wellness program. Employees could qualify for a drawing (i.e. gift cards, prizes or event tickets) if they complete a personal health assessment survey, biometric screening, a behavior change campaign, and/or a physical fitness challenge. Not all employees would get an incentive for completing the target behavior because that could lead to entitlement. Instead, they could earn the *chance* to win—sort of like the lottery, only not as big. Just having a chance to win is fun and is sufficient to motivate most employees. Participation incentives ideas could include but not limited to the following:

- Pedometers
- Restaurant gift cards (i.e. Subway or Panera Bread)
- Celebration and recognition events
- Discounts or reimbursement for offsite fitness club memberships
- Raffle – Full day of pay off or Flex Time
- Coupons for healthy food choices at a local supermarket chain

Apps & other Electronic Health Devices:

In this day and age, there are several mobile cell phone apps to use to track diet and fitness goals, such as WellSteps, Health (iPhone), MyFitness Pal just to name a few. Fit Bits are being used widely to track wellness activities and allow the person to receive text messages and calls while doing physical activity.