



WORKSITE WELLNESS IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

EFFECTIVE EMPLOYEE WELLNESS SOLUTIONS




HEALTHY
WORKERS ARE
GOOD FOR
BUSINESS.

WORKSITE WELLNESS IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

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Based on the *Worksite Resource Kit to Prevent Obesity and Related Chronic Diseases*, by the Department of Health and Family Services, Division of Public Health, Nutrition and Physical Activity Program, Wisconsin Partnership for Activity and Nutrition, Wisconsin. August 2006. PPH 40135 (08/06)

A man in a blue tank top and dark shorts is running on a paved road. He is wearing a red headband and is captured in a dynamic running pose. The background features a vast landscape with rolling hills, a body of water, and distant mountain ranges under a clear blue sky.

WHEN EMPLOYEES CHANGE THEIR
BEHAVIORS, HEALTH IMPROVES,
HEALTH CARE COSTS GO DOWN
AND PRODUCTIVITY GOES UP—
A WIN-WIN SITUATION FOR EVERYONE.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The cost of health care in the U.S. has increased dramatically in the past four decades. Currently, health care costs consume just under 20% of the nation's economic output. This has become a massive financial burden for all working adults.

Most Americans will get some form of chronic disease such as cancer, diabetes, or cardiovascular disease and most of these diseases are caused by unhealthy behaviors. These chronic diseases account for a lion's share of our health care cost burden. Poor health behaviors such as an unhealthy diet, lack of regular physical activity, and tobacco use lead to elevated health risks like high blood pressure, obesity, and high cholesterol. Eventually, these elevated health risks produce chronic diseases and elevated health care costs. This relationship is simple; poor behaviors lead to health risks, health risks lead to chronic diseases and chronic diseases cause high health care costs. It all starts with poor behaviors. But changing behaviors is hard. This is where worksite wellness programs come in.

Worksite wellness programs get to the heart of the health care crisis by changing unhealthy employee behaviors. When employees change their behaviors, health improves, health care costs go down and productivity goes up--a win-win situation for everyone.

We've created this guide to help you implement a wellness program at your worksite. This guide will help you every step of the way as you create a program that will meet the needs of your employees and help you combat the rising costs of health care.

You can decide to be proactive and get to the root of high health care costs or you can sit back and continue to watch health care costs rise. It takes time and a commitment to change worksite culture, but worksites that embrace employee wellness programs soon discover that the financial and individual health benefits dramatically overshadow any additional cost.

Worksite wellness is the right thing to do and now is the right time.

Steven Aldana, PhD

Troy Adams, PhD

WHAT IS THE BUSINESS CASE FOR WORKSITE WELLNESS?

WHAT IS WORKSITE WELLNESS?

For the purposes of this guide, worksite wellness includes all strategies employed at the worksite with the goal of promoting healthy lifestyles to employees and their families. Examples of wellness programming include: health education classes, subsidized use of fitness facilities, policies that promote healthy behavior, and any other activities, policies, or environmental changes that affect employee health.

WHY WORKSITE WELLNESS?

Healthy workers are good for business. Compared to unhealthy workers, healthy ones have:

- Lower health care costs
- Better productivity
- Better morale

Rising health care costs are a significant concern. The data show that when poor employee health habits result in unnecessary health care costs, everyone loses. Customers pay more for goods and services, employees take home less money, and companies allocate a greater proportion of after tax profits to meet the increasing demands of the health care system. Because employees spend most of their waking hours at work (nearly 50 hours per week), the worksite is an ideal setting for wellness programs.



WHAT IS THE WELLNESS VALUE PROPOSITION?

Wellness programs help control costs

Healthier employees are less costly. A strategic investment in the health of your employees will lower or at least slow the increase in health care costs. Employees with more risk factors, (e.g. obesity, smoking, physical inactivity), cost more to insure and pay more for health care than people with fewer risk factors.

A well-designed wellness program can help low-risk employees to maintain their risk status and high-risk employees to make lifestyle changes that will improve their quality of life and ultimately lower health care costs. The average Cost/Benefit ratio for wellness programs based on a summary of 28 articles was \$3.48 saved per \$1 invested.¹

Wellness programs reduce absenteeism

Healthier employees miss less work. Companies that support wellness and work to create a healthy culture have a greater percentage of employees at work every day. Because health frequently carries over into home life, employees may miss less work caring for ill family members as well. The cost savings resulting from a wellness program include reduced overtime, and fewer temporary workers, to name a few.

Wellness programs increase productivity

Healthier employees are more productive. Presenteeism (employees are physically present but ineffective) is reduced in workplaces that have wellness programs. Research suggests that the cost of lost productivity is double or even triple the cost of health care.²

Wellness programs improve employee morale and enhance organizational image

A company that cares about the health of employees is often seen as a better place to work. Such companies save money by retaining workers and they have a competitive edge in recruiting new employees.

Consider the evidence

- Modifiable lifestyle factors account for 25% of employee health care cost burden³
- Annual medical costs attributed to obesity and overweight employees are estimated to be nearly 40% higher than those who are normal weight⁴
- Obese employees are about 75% more likely to experience high rates of absenteeism (seven or more absences during a six-month period) than normal weight employees⁵



DEVELOPING A COMPANY WELLNESS PROGRAM

When developing a company wellness program there are two basic options: use an outside vendor or develop your program internally. Regardless of the option you choose, the following steps will be helpful.

Gain Support from Management

Support from all levels of management is key to the success of your wellness program. To gain management support, inform managers about the program early on and encourage them to participate. Regularly communicate the goals of the program and the anticipated benefits to both the company and employees.

Assemble a Wellness Committee

A Wellness Committee is responsible for promoting the program, planning activities, communicating with management and employees, and facilitating program evaluation. The size and composition of the committee will depend on the size of your company and the scope of the program. A committee of at least 6 and no more than 12 should be adequate. The committee should include staff that represent various employee shifts and departments such as management, union representatives, human resources, or administrative assistants.

Designate a Coordinator

A Wellness Coordinator should be designated by Management or elected by the Wellness Committee. The primary role of the coordinator is to lead the wellness committee and to coordinate the internal delivery of the program. Program success is often linked to the coordinator's time and ability. It is essential that some or all of the coordinator's time be dedicated to the wellness program. If this isn't possible, then an outside vendor should be contracted.

Wellness Committee Meetings

The Wellness Committee should meet at a minimum, on a quarterly basis. The committee may meet more often during peak times when planning or implementing activities or programs. Meeting frequency will depend on the committee goals.

Revitalizing the Wellness Committee

Make committee membership a one or two year commitment so that new ideas and constituents are included on a rotating basis. The committee should create a communication mechanism with management so successes can be reported.

Appoint or Recruit Team Leaders

Effective delivery of wellness initiatives is often dependent on a leader that is close to the participants. Depending on the structure of your organization, you may want to develop smaller teams that have leaders or "captains" to help provide motivation, information, and support to the program participants. Leaders have a major impact on whether the participants have a positive experience. A team leader can be the point of contact or messenger for information shared between the program participants and the Wellness Committee and vice versa.

It is important that the team leader be creative, enthusiastic, and committed to the program. The team leaders do not have to be the most active and healthy staff members; it is more important that they have the skills to help motivate their team members to success.

HOW MUCH WILL THIS COST?

Staff Time

Building a successful wellness program requires staff time. Every organization will need more staff time about three to six months prior to program launch. After the program kick-off, staffing needs will decrease.

Business Costs

Monetary costs can fluctuate widely, depending on whether the employer pays all costs, the employees pay all costs, or the costs are shared. Annual costs per employee per year for a highly effective program are just over \$110. Here are some projected costs for sample programs:

Program Type	Cost per Employee/year
A minimal program	\$1 - \$7
A moderate program	\$8 - \$15
A program with several activities	\$16 - \$35
A fairly comprehensive program	\$36 - \$75
A very comprehensive, effective program	\$76 - \$112

The return on investment (ROI) will likely be greater with a more comprehensive program. So while comprehensive programs will cost more, they will also yield a greater ROI.

For more information regarding the ROI for wellness programs, visit wellsteps.com. Click on the Tools link and find the ROI calculator. It is a free tool that will give you a good idea how much the investment in worksite wellness can save your company.



TO GAIN MANAGEMENT
SUPPORT, INFORM
MANAGERS ABOUT THE
PROGRAM EARLY ON AND
ENCOURAGE THEM TO
PARTICIPATE. REGULARLY
COMMUNICATE THE GOALS
OF THE PROGRAM AND THE
ANTICIPATED BENEFITS TO
BOTH THE COMPANY AND
EMPLOYEES.



IDENTIFY THE
CULTURAL SUPPORTS
FOR GOOD HEALTH
AND AREAS THAT MIGHT
NEED IMPROVEMENT.

WE HAVE SUPPORT, HOW DO WE GET STARTED?

ASSESS THE WORKSITE HEALTH CULTURE

The purpose of completing a health culture audit is to identify the cultural supports for good health and areas that might need improvement. A health culture audit will be a good starting point for your wellness initiative and will guide the actions of your wellness committee. Working to improve the health culture at your worksite will make the worksite more supportive of healthy behaviors (i.e. healthy food choices, no smoking policies, walking during breaks, etc.).

One method for assessing your health culture can be found online at [wellsteps.com](https://www.wellsteps.com) (click Tools). The tool is called the Checklist to Change. This checklist can be completed online in less than 10 minutes. You will receive immediate feedback and implementation strategies.

WE NEED HELP ASSESSING OUR HEALTH CULTURE

You should be able to complete the Checklist to Change without any help. But if you have questions about the feedback or if you want to implement any of the suggestions at your worksite, please contact your WellSteps Guide or email jenny@wellsteps.com.

ASSESS EMPLOYEE BEHAVIORS

The most common method of assessing employee behavior is to use a Health Risk Appraisal (HRA). An HRA has two outputs. The first output is an individual report that can help your employees identify modifiable risk factors for chronic disease. The second output is an aggregate report which can be used to stratify employees according to risk so that preventable health issues can be prioritized and strategies developed.

Both online and paper/pencil HRA's are available. Online HRA's are less expensive and offer feedback in real time. Whatever method you use, make it as simple as possible for employees to complete and submit their HRA so you get a high return rate. Consider offering an incentive for people who complete the assessment.

An excellent HRA can be found at [wellsteps.com/resources-pha](https://www.wellsteps.com/resources-pha). The WellSteps tool is called a Personal Health Assessment and is offered at a very reasonable price. The Personal Health Assessment generates reports for individuals and aggregate reports for companies.

HEALTH RISK APPRAISAL RESOURCES

Low Cost or free: [wellsteps.com/resources-pha](https://www.wellsteps.com/resources-pha)

Medium Cost: Ask employees to complete an HRA as part of their annual physical.

High Cost: Hire a vendor to conduct an onsite HRA and biometric screening.



**THERE ARE MANY WELLNESS
PARTNERS TO CHOOSE FROM
BUT NOT ALL WELLNESS
VENDORS ARE CREATED EQUAL.**

**FIND OUT WHY WELLSTEPS IS ON THE LIST OF TOP 25 WELLNESS
COMPANIES AND HOW TO CHOOSE THE BEST FIT FOR YOUR COMPANY.**

wellsteps.com/solutions

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING WELLNESS STRATEGIES

Everything about a successful wellness program depends upon your ability to change unhealthy employee behaviors. Should you handle planning and implementation internally or hire a vendor? There are pros and cons both ways. Vendors are generally less expensive and probably have more experience. In contrast, planning and implementing wellness strategies using internal resources will keep everything onsite and may provide greater flexibility and control.

USING A VENDOR

If you decide to hire a vendor, here is a list of questions you should ask:

Initial Experience With the Vendor

- Is the vendor's philosophy of health promotion consistent with your company's philosophy?
- Can the vendor explain why and how its product/service can meet the needs of your company?
- Is the vendor willing to make a proposal or presentation to your company?

Product Quality

- Can the vendor provide careful documentation of its product/service health or cost impact?
- Does the vendor have evaluative data to support the product/service?
- Can the vendor provide several different integrated products/services or does it just specialize in one area?
- Will the vendor customize the product to meet the needs of your company?

Professionals Involved with Delivery

- What type of education and training do the professionals involved with the product/service delivery have?
- Is the performance of professionals delivering products/services audited by the vendor for effectiveness, efficiency, accuracy, etc?

Product/Service Delivery & Customer Satisfaction

- Can the vendor clearly state in writing the products/services that will be provided?
- Is the vendor willing to establish a contract with your organization?
- Does the vendor provide you with an "account manager" who will take full responsibility for your complete customer satisfaction?

Evaluation and Reporting

- Does the vendor collect adequate and accurate data on the product/service activity and outcomes?
- Can the vendor provide reports and other aggregate data to the customer in appropriate electronic formats?

Product Cost and Value

- Is the cost of the product/service competitive with the cost of other vendors?
- Is the pricing all-inclusive (no hidden costs)?
- Do the results of the product/service justify the price?

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING WELLNESS STRATEGIES CONTINUED

IN-HOUSE PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Wellness programs can address many focus areas and employ several strategies. The goal of each strategy should be employee behavior change. Sample strategies for physical activity, nutrition, and tobacco cessation are shown on the following pages. The “What and Why” of each focus area is also described and corresponding strategies are arranged from low cost to high cost. Additional implementation resources are provided for each focus area. Obviously this is not an exhaustive list. As you determine your specific needs you will develop strategies for other wellness topics.



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY STRATEGIES

WHAT

People who are physically active reduce their risk for heart disease, diabetes, cancer and have lower stress. The minimum recommended level of physical activity to produce health benefits is 150 minutes of moderate physical activity each week.

WHY

People who stay fit will cost less, be present more, and be more productive at work.

Low Cost Strategies

- Create a company culture that discourages sedentary behavior, such as TV viewing on breaks and sitting for long periods of time.
- Offer flexible work hours to allow for physical activity during the day.⁶
- Support physical activity breaks during the workday, such as stretching or walking.⁷
- Map out on-site trails or nearby walking routes.⁸
- Host walk-and-talk meetings.⁹
- Post motivational signs at elevators and escalators to encourage stair use.¹⁰
- Have employees map their own biking or walking route to and from work.¹¹
- Provide bicycle racks in safe, convenient, and accessible locations.¹²

Medium Cost Strategies

- Provide shower and/or changing facilities on-site.
- Provide outdoor exercise areas such as fields and trails for employee use.¹³
- Provide or support recreation leagues and other physical activity events (on-site or in the community).
- Start employee activity clubs (e.g., walking, bicycling).

- Explore discounted or subsidized memberships at local health clubs, recreation centers, or YMCAs.
- Implement incentive-based programs to encourage physical activity, such as activity tracker walking challenges.

High Cost Strategies

- Offer on-site fitness opportunities, such as group classes or personal training.¹⁴
- Provide an on-site exercise facility.
- Provide incentives for participation in physical activity and/or weight management/maintenance activities.¹⁵
- Allow for use of facilities outside of normal work hours.
- Provide on-site child care facilities to facilitate physical activity.

Additional Resources

- See Eat Smart, Move More.¹⁶

NUTRITION STRATEGIES

WHAT

Healthy eating is crucial in the prevention and management of obesity and related conditions. Consumption of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains helps prevent chronic diseases such as cancer, stroke, and heart disease. Healthy eating also helps improve productivity. Regarding infant nutrition, employees who breastfeed will have healthier children who have a lower risk of childhood obesity, have lower family health care costs, and have a quicker return to pre-pregnancy weight.

WHY

Employees often eat and drink at work. So, strategies and policies that improve the food culture make sense. For example, employees will eat fruits, vegetables, and whole grain foods if they are available in the cafeteria, vending machines, and at company meetings. Reducing the price of healthy food can encourage employees to make better choices. Allowing employees to store and prepare food at work will help them avoid the expense and negative health impact of fast food.



Low Cost Strategies

- Send healthy food messages to employees via multiple channels (i.e. email, posters, payroll stuffers, etc.).¹⁷
- Promote fruit and vegetable consumption through motivational signs, posters, etc.¹⁸
- Provide protected time and dedicated space away from the work area for breaks and lunch.
- Offer appealing, low-cost, healthful food options, such as fruits and vegetables, juices, and low-fat dairy products in vending machines, snack bars and break rooms.¹⁹
- Promote healthy choices by increasing the percentage of healthy options that are available.²⁰
- Use competitive pricing to make healthier choices more economical.
- Advertise or mark healthy options so they stand out.
- Promote inexpensive healthy food.²¹
- Ask on-site cafeterias to follow healthy cooking practices.²²
- Ask on-site cafeterias to set nutritional standards that align with dietary guidelines for Americans.²³
- Provide appropriate portion sizes and provide portion size information via food labeling.
- Offer healthful food alternatives at meetings, company functions, and health education events.²⁴

Medium Cost Strategies

- Make kitchen equipment (refrigerators, microwaves, stoves, etc.) available for employee food storage and preparation.
- Offer local fruits and vegetables at the worksite (i.e. farmer's market).
- Facilitate on-site gardening.²⁵
- Provide interactive food opportunities such as taste testing, food preparation skills, and peer-to-peer modeling.²⁶
- Establish workplace policies and programs that promote and support breastfeeding.²⁷
- Provide an appropriate place for breastfeeding/pumping.

High Cost Strategies

- Provide incentives for participation in nutrition or weight management activities (these can range from low cost items such as water bottles to high cost items such as health insurance rebates).
- Include the employees' family members in a campaign promoting fruit and vegetable consumption.
- Provide lactation education programs.
- Acquire refrigerated vending machines to facilitate offering healthier cold items (fruits, vegetables, low-fat yogurt, etc.).

Additional Resources

- When making the switch to healthier vending options, check out this free presentation.²⁸
- See Eat Smart, Move More.²⁹
- Wisconsin: Building Breastfeeding-Friendly Communities.³⁰



TOBACCO CESSATION STRATEGIES

WHAT

The negative health effects of smoking and second hand smoke are well established. Cigarette smoking is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States each year. The list of diseases associated with cigarette smoking is long and costly. Compared to non-smokers, smokers cost more and consume more medical care. Insurance companies and employers now see the value of covering smoking cessation programs and medications. A large percentage of Americans have at least one smoking cessation medication available through their health plans.

WHY

The business case for covering smoking cessation is clear. According to the Centers for Disease Control, smoking costs the nation around \$200 billion a year in health care costs and lost worker productivity. The CDC estimates each employee that smokes costs your company about \$4500 per year in lost productivity and excess medical expenses. Smoking cessation programs have shown both an immediate and a long-term return on investment.

Low Cost Strategies

- Policy prohibiting tobacco use anywhere on company property.³¹
- Policy supporting participation in smoking cessation activities during work hours.³²
- Provide prompts/posters to support no tobacco use policy.³³

Medium Cost Strategies

- Promote the Tobacco Quit Line (800-QUIT-NOW).³⁴

High Cost Strategies

- Provide onsite individual or group counseling.³⁵
- Provide a health plan sponsored individual, group, or telephone counseling program.
- Provide cessation medications through health insurance.

Additional Resources

- Tobacco-Free Toolkit for Community Health Facilities.³⁶



**IDENTIFY THE ISSUES
THAT ARE MOST CHANGEABLE
AND FOCUS YOUR STRATEGIES.**

FOCUSING YOUR STRATEGIES

If you have used the tools presented so far, you now have a better understanding of the health challenges faced by your employees and the cultural factors that might be impeding good health. You have also been exposed to several strategies that address critical health issues. So what should you do now? Focus your strategies.

The “Plan to Change” Worksheet was designed to help focus your strategies by guiding you through the process of organizing data, prioritizing health issues, and identifying the issues that are most changeable. The Plan to Change Worksheet can be found in Appendix A.

Strategies come in varying intensities including, from lowest to highest: education, motivation, tools, environment, and policy. High intensity strategies take the most effort, time, and money but they are also the most effective. Usually, it is best to include a mix of strategies.

EDUCATION

The purpose of educational strategies is primarily to raise awareness, provide information, and create “water cooler” buzz. These small things will help move employees toward behavior change and will help shift the culture in a healthy direction. Educational strategies include:

- Information in the company newsletter
- Email campaigns
- Staff meeting presentations
- Informational posters in common areas
- Information pieces in payroll envelopes
- Lunch and learn workshops
- Health screenings and assessments

It is possible that some of your employees are experienced in education or communications. Be

sure to include them on the wellness committee. If your company uses a vendor, ensure that the vendor has access to communicate with all of your employees.

MOTIVATION

Some employees will engage in your programs while others won't because they were either already engaged, or they have no interest in engaging. In fact, people generally exist on a continuum of readiness to change. It is important to remember that there is no way to motivate every employee every time. However, you can improve success by applying these principles:

1. Time

- Combine two good things. For example, employees can bring a healthy lunch on a day when a speaker talks about healthy eating.
- Add 10 minutes of activity. Schedule 10 minutes to walk to or from the cafeteria, or from the parking lot.
- Consider time of day and duration of activity. Match the targeted audience with the time of day and duration of activity. Many people, if given a choice of any benefit, will choose more time with family. Therefore, before and after work are generally bad times.

2. Access

- Make it easy. Programs offered onsite increase participation.
- Make it convenient. Offer programs at breaks, lunch, or online.

3. Simplicity

- Make the choice clear. How to participate should be easy to understand.
- Make the benefits obvious. Highlight relevant program benefits in marketing.

4. Cost

- Free is best. Cost is a barrier; eliminate cost to increase participation.
- Cost sharing fosters commitment. When the employee has a tangible (money) or intangible cost (giving up something to enroll), commitment to change increases.

5. Incentives

Encourage or maintain participation, and reinforce benefits to “fence sitters.”

- **Benefits.** Health insurance rebates or contributions to Health Reimbursement Accounts are powerful incentives.
- **Money talks.** Worksites that have used cash or rebates as incentives have had impressive participation rates.
- **Time off.** Even a half-day off can be a powerful incentive. For some people, time is a more powerful incentive than money.
- **Achievement awards.** Recognition helps to reinforce program benefits. A quality certificate displayed in a public area is also a form of marketing.
- **Public recognition.** Public praise feels good to participants who have achieved goals, and creates a vicarious incentive for future participants.
- **Merchandise.** The possibilities are endless. The merchandise should be selected based on demographic characteristics of the employee population. This incentive can be awarded using a lottery style drawing.
- **Food.** Include healthy food to kick-off, revitalize, or wrap up a wellness campaign.
- **Entertainment.** Events can help jump-start, reenergize or wrap up a program. Entertainment is generally a morale booster.

6. Support

- **Buddy systems.** Supportive social groups can be the backbone for a successful program because each individual is committed to another person or team, and group programs are more fun for most people.
- **Team competition.** When “beating the LA office” is added to the reason why an employee should engage, both participation and commitment increase.
- **Coaching.** Using trained health coaches is more expensive but can help employees keep change commitments.
- **Timing.** Extra support is needed through the first 6 weeks of any behavior change process. Periodic support is needed during the first 6 months.

7. Goals.

Setting goals leads to greater participation.

Whether it is a team goal of “walking” to New York City by New Years, or an individual goal to walk 100 miles, goals increase the likelihood that people will stick with a program.

TOOLS

A baby stroller is a great example of a tool. It allows parents with young children to still walk or jog. Tools are items or skills your employees need if they are going to be successful at changing behaviors. Learning to stir fry vegetables is a skill. Learning how to dress for outdoor exercise is a skill, while comfortable walking shoes are tools. A nicotine patch is a tool. You get the idea. Your employees are going to need new skills and tools if they are going to experience long-term changes in behavior.

ENVIRONMENT AND POLICY

Employees spend more waking hours at work than anywhere else. So it makes sense that changing the environment or culture of an organization would support the individual behavior change process. Policies promote widespread behavior change because they change the “rules.” Policies in the work environment not only influence individual behavior at work, but can also lead to changes outside of work. In many cases, policy changes make it easier to make healthy choices. An example would be serving bagels and fruit instead of pastries at company events. Some other examples are: healthy food guidelines for company events, no smoking on company property, and company cost-sharing for health club memberships.

THE CHECKLIST TO CHANGE is a short survey you can take to help you see what things your worksite is doing to help or hamper healthy behaviors. It shows you what environmental and policy strategies you may not have thought of. It's an extremely helpful tool to help you make your worksite one that supports healthy living. You can take the Checklist to Change at [wellsteps.com](https://www.wellsteps.com). Look under the “Tools” link.

SUMMARY

Use the information in this section to laser focus your strategies. Address some of the simple changes first to generate change momentum. As your program matures, you can always tackle some of the more difficult issues.

**ADDRESS
SIMPLE
CHANGES
FIRST
TO GENERATE
CHANGE
MOMENTUM.**



HOW EFFECTIVE WAS OUR WELLNESS PROGRAM?

The business case for worksite wellness programs was presented at the beginning of this guide. The case included reduced health care costs, increased productivity, decreased absenteeism, and improved employee health and morale. It is important to determine whether your program produced any of these effects. So in the planning process, consider how and when you will evaluate. Evaluation will help modify strategies to better meet employee needs and to justify your efforts by determining the degree to which employee's attitudes, behaviors, and health indicators change as a result of your program.

TYPES OF EVALUATION

Types of evaluation include process or outcome. Both are important and should be used.

Process Evaluation

Process evaluation is easier to conduct and provides quicker feedback on the efficiency of implementation and satisfaction of employees. Examples of process measures include:

- Number of staff enrolled and participating.
- Web site hits.
- Observation or counts such as the number of employees walking at lunch.
- Participant satisfaction via survey, focus groups, interviews, stakeholder survey, etc.
- Policy or environmental changes. The Checklist to Change could be used to compare policy and environmental change across time.

Outcome Evaluation

Outcome evaluation is more difficult and time consuming. To conduct an effective outcome evaluation, the marker being assessed should be clearly identifiable and the baseline data should be available. An example would be to compare the absentee rate before and after program implementation. Another example would be to compare the absentee rate for employees actively participating in the program against those who are not. The same technique could be applied with health care claims. Examples of outcome measures include:

- Pre/Post test surveys that measure change in attitude, knowledge and behaviors across time.
- Vending items being chosen (arrange with vendor to track selections).
- Cafeteria menu options (e.g. the percent of entrees that are healthy).
- Health Indicators such as reduced risk factors. Comparison of company aggregate screening measures such as blood pressure, cholesterol, body weight, BMI, etc. before and after a specified program or campaign.
- Return on investment. What it costs to run your wellness program (the investment), is fairly easy to quantify. However, computing savings from reduced health care claims, absenteeism, and improved productivity may be harder to calculate. Work with your human resources and benefits contacts to determine what can be measured and then set a "baseline" figure to compare against.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO DETERMINE WHETHER YOUR PROGRAM PRODUCED ANY EFFECTS. SO IN THE PLANNING PROCESS, CONSIDER HOW AND WHEN YOU WILL EVALUATE.

SAMPLE EVALUATION TOOL & MEASURES

SAMPLE PROCESS OBJECTIVES	2018	2019	CHANGE
Number of staff enrolled and participating	200	220	10%
Company wellness web site hits	10,620	22,000	107%
Observation or counts	60	75	25%
Participant satisfaction	72%	80%	11%
Policy or environmental changes	10 in place	15 in place	50%
SAMPLE OUTCOME OBJECTIVES	2018	2019	CHANGE
Pre/Post test surveys	78%	85%	9%
Vending items being chosen	25% Healthy choice	35% Healthy choice	40%
Cafeteria menu options	25% Healthy choice	35% Healthy choice	40%
Health Indicators such as reduced risk factors	% HBP 25% Mean Chol 250 BMI = 30%	% HBP 15% Mean Chol 200 BMI = 28.8%	40% 20% 4%
Return on investment	Sick days = 3 per BEE	Sick days = 2.7 per BEE	10%
	Health Care Claims = \$864,000	Health Care Claims = \$789,000	9%

Evaluation Resources

- Health Improvement: A Comprehensive Guide to Designing, Implementing and Evaluating Worksite programs. Center for Prevention and Health Services Issue Brief.³⁷
- WELCOA Absolute Advantage: Carefully Evaluating Outcomes.³⁸

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, health is an issue for employees and employers alike. Investing in an effective wellness program shows a corporate concern for employee health, and the investment will most likely generate a return in health care and productivity that far exceeds the cost.

APPENDIX A: PLAN TO CHANGE WORKSHEET

INTRODUCTION

Applying evidence-based strategies can alter the increasing cost of health care but it takes planning. “Plan to Change” will help you create a blue print to change the health culture of your company.

Someone at your worksite should complete the Checklist to Change and it would be helpful if your employees completed a Health Risk Appraisal.

STEP 1 IDENTIFY HEALTH ISSUES

The first step of Plan to Change is to identify critical health issues at your worksite. If you have aggregate data from a Health Risk Appraisal, list the top five most prevalent issues. If you do not have such data, knowing the Risks and Trends in Your State³⁹ might be helpful. With help from others who are concerned about the health of employees at your company, rank the five issues from most important to least important. One way to do this is to consider the overall cost of each issue. If you would like additional information to help you with this step, see the Public Health Priorities from the U.S. Surgeon General.⁴⁰

STEP 2 SELECT THE MOST CHANGEABLE HEALTH ISSUE

Thinking about your worksite culture, examine your critical health issues. Rank these issues from most to least changeable. The goal is to identify a critical but changeable issue. Perhaps your top three issues are smoking, obesity, and poor nutrition. In the past, you know that there has been resistance to smoking policy from certain employee groups. Because your worksite has a cafeteria, vending machines, and often serves food at company meetings, you feel like there are several opportunities to impact nutritional quality. Focusing on nutrition would also help with obesity, so you choose nutrition as the most changeable issue.

STEP 3 CHOOSE CULTURE CHANGE STRATEGIES

Thinking about your most critical but changeable issue, examine the Checklist to Change results (or complete the Checklist to Change now). Select two or three strategies that will address your issue that you think can be implemented during the next 12 months.

STEP 4 ESTABLISH THE CHANGE STANDARD

This step is best performed with a committee. Starting with your first strategy, identify the change standard which should include “by when” and “how much.” *Example: The first strategy might be to improve the nutritional quality of the food and beverages served at company meetings.*

CHANGE STANDARD	BY WHEN	HOW MUCH
Fresh fruits and vegetables, and whole grain bread will be served at company meetings	January 2020	75% of the time
Water, 100% juice, coffee and tea will be served instead of soda pop or other sugary beverages	March 2020	100% of the time

STEP 5 PLAN WHAT, WHO, AND WHEN

Plan the specific things that will be done, who will do each and by when. *Example:*

WHAT	WHO	WHEN
Meet with vendors to discuss options	Brianne and Cho	By August 31
Organize taste test of various choices	Brianne and Cho	By September 30
Meet with managers to discuss policy	Jake and Felix	By October 31
Hold departmental presentations	Felicia and Ahmad	All of November
Policy implementation	All	January

STEP 6 DECIDE HOW TO EDUCATE AND MOTIVATE EMPLOYEES

Your efforts to change the culture will impact employee behavior. But the evidence shows that employees also need education and motivation. Deciding what educational and motivational strategies to use is a two-step process. First, determine the budget for Health & Productivity Management strategies. The available budget expressed as “per employee per year” will help you understand both the intensity of program you can afford and the return on investment (ROI) you can expect. The experts suggest the following costs and associated ROI estimates.

INTENSITY	PROGRAM DESCRIPTION	COST PEPY	ROI
Low	HRAs, Books, Brochures	\$10-20	1.5 to 1
Medium	Low + Interventions	\$21-50	2.5 to 1
High	Medium + Environmental support, Policy or Culture Change	\$51-150	3.5 to 1

STEP 7 COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The last step involves creating accountability by scheduling meetings so that all committee members can report progress updates and plan next steps. The committee chair may request email updates each week except during the week when the committee meets.

APPENDIX B: REFERENCES

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