

STEP 1: BUILD A SOLID WELLNESS FOUNDATION FOR YOUR WORKSITE

Successful worksite wellness programs should be built on a solid foundation. A comprehensive worksite wellness program with dedicated staff and allocated time and resources will ensure an organization's successful shift to a sustainable culture of employee wellness. The following steps will help build the foundation:

- Understand organizational structure
- Gain leadership support
- Form a wellness committee
- Brand the wellness program

Worksite wellness is not “one-size-fits-all.” Organizations should take time to gather data about specific organizational operations. They can begin by becoming familiar with information that is already available: mission and vision statements; health insurance coverage, claims and costs; and employee performance and productivity measurements. It is imperative that an organization looks at all pertinent factors to fully understand the operating structure of the worksite and align the wellness program and goals appropriately.

Gain Leadership Support

Gaining senior-level support and leadership is paramount to the development and sustainability of a successful worksite wellness program. As chief executive officers and other senior management recognize the potential benefits of the program, other sectors of the organization are likely to follow suit.

Leadership in these areas makes a critical difference:

- **Accountability**—Senior-level leadership should demonstrate to the rest of the organization how improvements in health are linked to improvements in productivity and profitability.
- **Investment**—an effective worksite wellness program requires a substantial initial and continuing investment of time and money to improve employee health and yield quantifiable results. According to the Wellness Councils of America, the ideal investment for an organizational wellness initiative is somewhere between \$100 and \$150 per eligible employee per year.
- **Commitment**—Senior-level leadership should support long-term strategic planning, dedication of sufficient resources, organizational policies, environmental changes, incentives and communication. In addition, senior-level leadership should commit to the integration of health and wellness into insurance plan benefits and program design.
- **Leadership by example**—for organizational change to be effective, organizations need a champion. There's no better champion for a worksite wellness program than the head of the worksite, the chief executive officer or someone in an

equivalent position. CEOs who embrace health as a personal priority stand as role models for the rest of the organization and inspire more widespread participation in the worksite wellness program.

- Encouragement—Senior-level leadership support and participation sends a positive message that employee health is important. In return, employees are more likely to be inspired and encouraged to create a healthy work environment where healthy eating and physical activity are part of the culture.

Form a Wellness Committee

The wellness team is the heart and soul of an organization's wellness initiative. While senior-level representation is important for this team, it's even more critical that it be diverse in its representation. The most successful programs have wellness teams comprised of members from all levels in a company, executive to front-line, who fully understand the team's purpose is to improve employees' health and contain health care costs. Organizations may want to consider recruitment of members who are enthusiastic about the proposed wellness program, as well as those who are skeptical, to maximize support from management and potential participants.

Here are more tips on forming an effective wellness team:

- Voluntary or appointed—Team members can either be recruited or managers could appoint representatives from different areas of the organization.
- Diversity of skills—being a healthy and active employee in the organization is not a requirement for membership. It's important to include employees with diverse skills and at different levels of healthy behaviors.
- Defined leadership—whether an organization decides to develop a wellness team structure with formal by-laws and elected positions or embrace a more informal structure with volunteer committee members, it is important to know who is steering the ship.
- Commitment—Make it clear that everyone on the wellness team is accountable for the success of the program.
- Term length—some members may want their presence on the team to be temporary while others may want permanent seats. Give members the option to renew or discontinue involvement after a designated time commitment.
- Alternates—designate an alternate for each committee member to ensure representation at every meeting.
- Schedules—Set meetings with defined dates and times with a facilitator designated to ensure the group stays focused, on task and respects the time commitment of its members.

Good luck as you build your foundation for Wellness. Please remember, we are here to help!

Source: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment