

### STEP 3: PLAN & CREATE POLICY

With pressure mounting for worksite wellness committees to demonstrate the effectiveness of health promotion programs, the topic of program planning becomes increasingly important. Organizations investing in worksite health management programs expect these initiatives to positively impact their bottom line, enhance employee productivity and contribute to employee satisfaction. With this pressure to perform, many worksite wellness committees/staff gloss over the important planning step and go straight to implementation. This approach leads to a planning process that is often incomplete and unorganized. Worksite wellness program committees/staff often have good intentions, but with other job responsibilities often overlook this important step.

Despite these obstacles, it is possible to develop a systematic operating plan based on best practices. This approach increases the likelihood that the team will stay on track and achieve positive outcomes for the program. Organizations that do not invest in planning can find it difficult to prove the worth of the program, while organizations that do will create a roadmap for success. The planning process helps build the foundation and identify the components of a successful program.

#### **Components to Consider When Developing an Effective Operating Plan:**

- Vision/Mission statement
- Specific long-term and short-term goals and objectives
- Data collection
- Program design
- Programs and interventions
- Roles and responsibilities
- Timelines
- Itemized budget
- Marketing and communication strategies
- Evaluation protocol

#### **Vision/Mission Statement**

When planning, keep in mind the mission statement for your wellness program that was developed in the **“Build” Step**. More information can be found at

<https://member.carefirst.com/employer/workplace-wellness/creating-mission-strategic-plan.page>

or

<http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/files/wellness/healthyplaces/pdf/Mission-Statement-examples.pdf>

## Goals and Objectives

Goals and objectives are the heart of any worksite wellness program plan. It is important to draft a clear statement of the desired changes sought from the current health status of the organization and identify the current level of functioning, behavior, attitude, knowledge, or skills. Focusing clearly on the targeted change is key to creating useful goals and objectives. Taking the time, together as a team, to craft clear statements about your targeted health goals and objectives lays a solid foundation that will guide your organization to health and wellness. Your goals identify what you want your wellness program to achieve in the next year, the next five years or the next ten. Your objectives are the specific steps you will take to achieve your goals.

**The best objectives have several characteristics in common. They are S.M.A.R.T.**

- They are **specific**. That is, they tell how much (e.g., 40%) of what is to be achieved (e.g., what behavior of whom or what outcome) by when (e.g., by 2020)?
- They are **measurable**. Information concerning the objective can be collected, detected, or obtained from records (at least potentially).
- They are **achievable**. Not only are the objectives themselves possible, it is likely that your organization will be able to pull them off.
- They are **relevant** to the wellness mission. Your organization has a clear understanding of how these objectives fit in with the overall vision and mission of the program.
- They are **timed**. Your organization has developed a timeline by which they will be achieved.
- They are **challenging**. They stretch the group to set its aims on significant improvements that are important to both staff and management.

Examples of **S.M.A.R.T. objectives**:

By August 2020, designate space and purchase equipment for on-site facilities for individual exercise (or contract for services for group exercise classes in yoga, dance, aerobics, etc.).

By August 2020, provide to all staff incentives or options for reduced fees to memberships and access to off-site health clubs, recreation centers or specific facilities (e.g., tennis courts, weight rooms, cardiovascular exercise equipment, swimming pool, etc.).

Once you have identified your worksite wellness goals and objectives, it's a good idea to review and adjust worksite policies or develop new ones. Focus policy development on key components of your wellness goals. For example:

- Increased Health Awareness and Education
- Losing Weight and Eating Healthier Foods
- Increased Physical Activity



- A Smoke or Tobacco-free Work Place
- Reduced Stress

You may still be asking yourself why you need a worksite wellness policy. Worksite wellness policies can have long-term impacts on the health of employees and the community. At the same time, these initiatives can also reduce health care costs, increase productivity, reduce absenteeism and improve employee morale. Many employers have implemented worksite wellness programs to promote the health and well-being of their employees, but have not integrated these programs into written policies. Written worksite wellness policies are critical to the sustainability and effectiveness of worksite wellness efforts. A range of different legal and policy issues must be considered when developing and implementing worksite wellness policies. Well-crafted worksite wellness policies can provide essential direction and leadership in creating a culture of wellness and support for the long-term health and well-being of employees, consumers and the surrounding communities.

Employers across the country are exploring innovative approaches to worksite wellness policies that incorporate a broad vision of health. Increasingly, these initiatives are geared toward improving the health of the workplace through healthy food procurement and tobacco-free policies. As employers seek to reduce health care costs through the improvement of employee health, worksite wellness policies hold great promise in the movement toward greater health, productivity and well-being.

### **Legal Bounds of Wellness Polices and Programs**

As employers increasingly turn to creative solutions to the health care problem, such as wellness policies, they should be aware of regulations under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), Americans with Disability Act (ADA), and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). The following are general guidelines:



- The wellness program must be a voluntary plan.
- Medical information obtained in the course of conducting the plan must remain confidential.
- The program must not penalize nonparticipants.
- Medical examinations should not be conducted in the workplace.

At a minimum, employers interested in implementing wellness programs should consider the following recommendations:

- Frame incentives in a wellness plan as rewards rather than as penalties or disincentives.
- Provide accommodations for individuals with disabilities who choose to participate in a wellness plan.
- If providing health premium discounts or other health insurance rewards to plan participants, provide accommodations for those whose medical conditions make it inadvisable to participate.
- Avoid setting wellness plan incentives on specific weight-related criteria (i.e., reaching a specific BMI).
- Keep all medical information obtained as part of a wellness plan confidential, and segregate the information from other personnel documents.
- Where possible, have a third-party administrator handle all medical information and have the administrator shield the information from the employer.

### **Sample Wellness Policies**

The following pages include examples of comprehensive worksite wellness policies. Policy examples are meant to be used as a template for creating your own organizational policies. The following topics are included:

- Nutrition
- Physical activity
- Tobacco
- Injury Prevention
- Ergonomics
- Emergency Preparedness

### **Resources:**

<https://www.tuftshealthplan.com/THP/media/PdfDocuments/worksite-wellness-guide.pdf>

[http://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/prevention\\_agenda/2013-2017/plan/chronic\\_diseases/focus\\_area\\_1.htm](http://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/prevention_agenda/2013-2017/plan/chronic_diseases/focus_area_1.htm)

### **Data Collection**

The next step is data collection. There are several methods of collecting data to determine the design of your worksite wellness program. Some of these include:

- **Benefits plan:** Review the benefits provided to employees, especially those under preventive services. Address issues that might be barriers to quality and appropriate care.
- **Claims & Pharmacy Data:** A thorough review of your annual health care and pharmacy costs will help determine trends, identify areas of concern and open doors of opportunity to collaborate with your health plan, wellness vendors and vendor partners to address the health conditions facing your employee population.
- **Health Assessment Data.** Refer to Assess Step.
- **Productivity Data (Absenteeism & Presenteeism (attending work while sick))**
- **Employee Needs & Interest Surveys.** Refer to Assess Step.

### **Program Design**

The design of your program is what gives it structure and purpose. Employers have the opportunity to select the level of program they want to implement.

### **Benefit Plan Design**

Wellness programs can be an integral part of your benefit plan design and consideration of such programs should be a part of your annual renewal negotiations. Plan design can include removing barriers to the cost of preventive screenings, reducing the cost share for pharmaceuticals that are critical for chronic conditions, offering more favorable employee contributions for participation in health management initiatives and ensuring appropriate medical management activities are in place. Also, employers can work with a wellness provider on implementing wellness programs and link data to the medical plan. Organizations can also highlight current health improvement activities that are part of the existing medical plan within the current benefits communication plan. Make sure to check your benefit plan to determine if there are incentives for worksite wellness programs.

### **The Case for Incentives**

Employers implementing results-based worksite wellness programs have shown that you can demonstrate economic and productivity gains. The summary evidence reflects average reductions of 25 percent or better in sick leave, health plan rates, and workers' compensation and disability costs. Many organizations have indicated that their programs have provided indirect benefits as well. They have helped companies improve employee relations and recruiting and retention efforts. Based on these results and case studies, worksite health promotion represents one of the most significant investment strategies available for decreasing health-care costs and enhancing the productivity of American workers.

### **Incentives Gaining Steam**

To find more effective ways to control health care costs, many employers are providing incentives to drive employee participation, engagement and satisfaction. In Hewitt Associates' 10th Annual Health Care Report (2009), 63 percent of employers reported that they offer incentives as one of their primary tactics to address both cost and health concerns of their employees

## Types of Incentives

Cash bonuses and gift cards are still the most common type of incentive. However, employers are experimenting with different incentive plans to find the best combination of incentives that will not only motivate employees to participate in programs but to stay engaged in the programs over the long term.

- **Trinkets and T-shirts – 10-15% 25-\$50 Cash – 35-75%**

Make the incentives for employees desirable and worth the effort. Use a health interest and/or culture survey to identify what incentives would enhance employee participation. Sample health interest and culture surveys can be found in the Assess Step section of the toolkit. Once you determine your employees' preference, consider some of the following types of incentives:

- **Achievement awards:** Verbal praise and a pat on the back are motivational to some, but a token of recognition may offer more. A colorful certificate to congratulate an employee for achieving a health-related goal is one example.
- **Public recognition:** Publicly recognizing employees who achieve wellness goals in employee newsletters, staff e-mails or at team meetings can encourage healthy behavior. Honoring employees who have attempted to make positive lifestyle changes can motivate others to do the same.
- **Merchandise Award:** Reward participants with a t-shirt, canvas bag, cap or other promotional items. Use the organization wellness logo on promotional items to reinforce the branding of the wellness program.
- **Workplace benefits:** In addition to cash incentives, employees may also respond to workplace benefits, such as administrative leave, health insurance premium discounts or designated parking spots.
- **Food:** Offer beverages and healthy snacks to employees who participate in onsite wellness programs. Use gift certificates to a local restaurant as door prizes.
- **Entertainment:** Hold a drawing for movie tickets, sporting events tickets or fitness store gift certificates for participants of wellness programs.

## Which Incentives are the most effective?

While cash may be king in some companies, other organizations may find that gift cards or time off may get the same or better results and be less expensive. Many organizations are finding success by integrating their wellness program with their benefits design. Typically, these organizations provide a health care premium reduction if an employee participates in certain components of the program. This approach may be structured in to be cost-neutral, allowing employers the opportunity to offer greater benefits for the same cost.

### **Carrot or Stick Approach**

In addition to the types of incentives and amounts, internal discussions always involve the use of “carrots” or “sticks” to encourage or discourage employees from engaging in certain behaviors. The more common approach is rewarding employees for positive lifestyle practices. These behaviors typically include enrolling in a program, completing a single event (e.g., a Health Risk Assessment) or completing a program. While some employers are putting more punitive practices in place in the hopes of reducing unhealthy behaviors, others have seen a backlash from employees for this approach. Employees for the most part are in favor of rewards directly tied to the nature of the activity. For instance, in a recent Work Trends survey, three quarters of workers (74%) said employers should be allowed to give lower health care premiums to employees who participate in wellness programs. On the other hand, they are not supportive of penalizing employees who engage in potentially unhealthy behavior.

### **Programs and Interventions**

Determining programs and interventions is one of the most important elements of a comprehensive plan. After all, this is what the employee sees. This is the high touch, visible aspect of the program. When developing a programming plan or creating your annual program calendar, consider the levels of intervention. The goal of determining the right program mix is to have something for everyone; ideas may include:

- **Awareness Activities** may include posters, newsletters, blood drives or videos on health topics.
- **Motivational Activities** may include blood pressure screenings, health education seminars or individual dietary consultations.
- **Lifestyle/Behavior Change** may include multi-week sessions geared toward top risks such as weight, physical activity, stress or tobacco.
- **Supportive Environment** may include healthy meeting policies, weight scales in the restrooms, onsite fitness facilities or blood pressure machines in common areas.

*Source: WorkTrends Study, John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, May*

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

As the plan develops, the number of tasks and programs to implement may become overwhelming. The key to tackling this is to share the burden. Make members of the worksite wellness committee responsible for certain areas of the plan. Volunteer members of the committee can help with many of the following tasks or initiatives:

- Help identify community resources.
- Request samples and review informational materials.
- Assist in gathering budget information.

- Reserve conference rooms and coordinate speakers.
- Voice their opinions on incentive selection.
- Market and communicate program activities to employees.

Make sure to use volunteers in an organized and gracious manner. People may find volunteering to be fun and non-intimidating once they try it out a little at a time. When delegating, be clear about *Who* needs to do *What* by *When*.

### **Timelines**

Establishing a calendar of events for your program with specified dates for data collection, surveys, programs and evaluation is foundational to program success. Putting clear parameters on *when* and *how* activities are going to get done allows volunteers to help.

### **Itemized Budget**

What is a plan without a budget? Identifying the sources of money that need to be spent in the various areas is important for the organization of your worksite wellness program as well as for the leadership team that approves your budget. Use a detailed spreadsheet to manage your budget and assign one or two individuals to be responsible for managing the budget and tracking expenses.

### **Communications and Marketing plan**

Research shows that a receptive worksite culture and effective communications may be just as important as financial incentives. Your planning process should include the creation of a communications and marketing plan aimed at creating, building and sustaining participation. “Build it and they will come” simply does not apply to worksite wellness programs. To engage employees, you must include communication in every step of program implementation. A “strong communications strategy” can be defined as using an average of three different delivery channels (electronic, home, onsite) and four different communication tools (e-mail blasts, newsletters, flyers, meetings) to reach the required audience.

Successful communications and marketing plans include a mission statement, situational analysis, measurable objectives and specific strategies. The plan should identify appropriate communication channels and messages. Such plans are usually developed by the worksite wellness committee, ideally with the help of a member with some communications expertise. While the communications plan is important, it doesn’t have to be elaborate. Here are some things to think about:

- **Mission:** Put simply, the mission of any worksite wellness program communications plan is to build and sustain interest and maintain participation in the program and its activities.
- **Situational analysis:** During the Assess step is a good time to explore your employees’ preferred communication channels, awareness of health issues and health plan benefits, responsiveness or resistance to health messages and other factors that will influence



your communications' strategies. This assessment will guide development of messages and choice of communication channels.

- **Objectives:** Your objectives should be measurable and incremental, e.g. "Increase participation in program activities through targeted messages delivered through multiple communication channels." The measurement in this case would be participation increases. Special offers embedded in such communication pieces or a yearly survey can also be used to measure the success of your communication objectives.
- **Strategies:** Communication strategies should include specific messages and messengers, appropriate communication channels and targeted audiences, e.g. Develop a payroll stuffer and flyer to encourage employees to take the stairs twice a day. You should include strategies that reach all employees, customizing messages that resonate with employees through their favorite communication medium.

To maximize employee engagement, organizations must take into consideration not only the type and amounts of incentives, but must also assess worksite culture and develop solid communication plans that resonate with employee health attitudes.

### **Communication channels and messages**

A key to a successful program is the mixed use of innovative marketing and communication strategies that provide employees with written, oral and electronic wellness messages. The communications should be professional, dynamic and appealing. Above all, make sure the messaging and tactics resonate with employees.

#### Promote written communications through the following approaches:

- **Bulletin boards** — Message boards are placed in centralized locations throughout the worksite, including break rooms, wellness center(s), stairwells and other heavy traffic areas.
- **Promotional flyers, information handouts & posters** — Tailored communication pieces that are specific to the branded program components are sent to all employees outlining services available. Flyers can be distributed in employee mailboxes or e-mailed to all employees.
- **Employee success stories** — Share motivating and inspiring success stories with all employees. These stories capture an employee's dedication, consistency, challenges and rewards of working towards personal health goals.
- **Employee personalized profile reports** — Create multi-faceted profiles that include pre- and post-measurements and the individual's average scores depicted in graph form. Also, a narrative summary outlines significant individual milestones the employee has met.
- **Individual health risk assessment or appraisal** — Develop a confidential report that contains the participant's measured results, including lab analysis, body measurements, behaviors, lifestyles and health history.

- **Organization Newsletters** — include a wellness section in the company newsletter with success stories from employees, wellness tips, nutritious recipes, etc.
- **Internal website/Intranet information and reminders** — Use the internal website to post and highlight wellness initiative activities and milestones for the organization.

Try these methods for personal communications:

- **Leadership meetings** — Engage leadership in promoting wellness opportunities that are available to all employees and their dependents. Encourage these company leaders to lead by example and to participate in at least one component of a wellness program to build an active culture of health.
- **Wellness vendors** — be sure to share vendor expertise with employees and allow vendors to educate staff as they provide services to the organization.
- **External wellness opportunities** — Provide employees with information on community events or happenings by either supporting or sponsoring an event through individual or team participation.
- **All employee meetings** — Company-wide employee meetings are great venues for giving employees the most recent wellness-related updates and educational materials.
- **Department meetings** — Utilize department meetings to promote and encourage healthy behaviors.
- **Employee orientations** — give new employees an overview of the program, which includes the company’s mission and vision, as well as the latest written communications about your wellness initiative. It’s also a prime opportunity to retrieve information about new employees’ lifestyle and wellness choices.
- **Phone calls** — Provide one-on-one communications with employees to address questions, concerns, behavior modification, interest and feedback.
- **One-on-one consultations** — Offer one-on-one opportunities to connect in person with individual employees and coach them toward their individual wellness intentions.
- **Lunch & Learns** — A lunch or break room is a great experiential venue to not only educate, but also promote preventative approaches to health and wellness goals.

As for electronic communications, consider these methods:

- **Daily activity reminders** — send daily or weekly e-mail reminders to all employees to keep them informed of wellness services, challenges and opportunities.
- **Scheduler database** — Consider creating or purchasing a company database/scheduler which employees can use to reserve a spot in a wellness activity. Reports help track and analyze interventions offered each year.
- **E-mails** — E-mails often serve as the main source of wellness program marketing and communication strategies. They are an effective way to reach all employees at all sites in a timely manner.
- **Webinars** — Offer short webinars on a specific topic to reinforce and motivate employees. This could work well for organizations with multiple sites.

**Resources:**

- Wellness Councils of America: [www.welcoa.org](http://www.welcoa.org)
- Scientific and Technical Information: Simply Put. Office for Communications, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- American Cancer Society Workplace Solutions Assessment: <http://www.acsworkplacesolutions.com/wpassessment.asp>

**Evaluation Protocol**

Measuring employee engagement and participation is key to sustaining an effective wellness program.

Source: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Wellness Councils of America, CDC, American Cancer Society, and CDC Lean Works!