

STEP 4: IMPLEMENT BY PUTTING WORKSITE WELLNESS PLAN INTO ACTION

There are many evidence-based worksite wellness practices for health topics including weight management, physical activity, nutrition, tobacco cessation and chronic disease management and prevention. Each organization should determine what level of implementation is right for them. For some, it may include only physical activity programs, while others may want to address policy and environmental changes and/or healthcare benefits design. In the following pages you will find recommendations and guidance for physical activity. Additional evidence based worksite wellness practices on various topics such as nutrition, weight management, tobacco, stress management, lactation, chronic disease prevention and management, cancer screening, cardiovascular health are also available. Contact the Worksite Wellness/We Choose Health staff at your local health department for more information. They can help you get started on planning and implementing your worksite wellness program.

The implementation step is often where worksite groups want to start. However, to create a comprehensive program that produces results, an organization should follow the framework by building a strong foundation, collecting data, and planning a sustainable program that is sure to fit their employees' needs. This process assures that your program is grounded in a plan that both management and employees can embrace.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Background for Physical Activity

Employees who exercise have fewer illnesses, less stress, greater productivity and better outlooks toward work and work relationships. Research continues to demonstrate a relationship between inactivity and obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, depression and certain cancers.

To fully understand the financial impact of physical inactivity at your organization, visit a cost calculator at www.ecu.edu/picostcalc (Courtesy of East Carolina University). To get the greatest benefit from this specialized tool you will need the following information:

- Your state
- Number of working adults
- Number of adults 18+
- Percentage of adults over age 65
- Median per capita salary of workforce

The Federal Government issued its first ever guidelines for physical activity in September 2008. The 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans (<http://www.health.gov/paguidelines/factsheetprof.aspx>) published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is designed to provide information and guidance on the types and amounts of physical activity that provide substantial health benefits for Americans age 6

years and older. According to these guidelines, regular physical activity over months and years can produce long-term health benefits.

Policy for Physical Activity

Providing a healthy environment that supports regular physical activity is a positive way to influence healthy behaviors at the worksite. Empowering healthy choices through strong leadership can demonstrate that executives, managers and supervisors “walk the walk.” Policies such as those listed below create a positive environment for physical activity and are becoming common in the workplace.

Exercise/Flex Time Policy

Create time for physical activity through early release or extended lunch times one day a week. This policy could also include usage parameters for onsite fitness or recreation center participation.

Healthy Meeting Guidelines

Encourage 10-minute stretch or activity breaks for any meeting that lasts 60 minutes or longer.

Recreation/Fitness Center Reimbursement or Subsidy Policy

Offer discounted gym memberships. Discounted memberships encourage employees to start regular physical fitness programs while also allowing them to save money.

Programs for Physical Activity

Programs for physical activity can range from a newsletter article on the benefits of fitness to a one-mile walk at lunch to a large scale, multi-week program that encourages regular physical activity. Examples of physical activity programs are listed below. Some are inexpensive and easy to implement, while others may take more time to implement and require greater resources.

Stairwell Campaign

Encouraging the use of stairs over elevators is one way to encourage physical activity and decrease energy costs related to elevator usage. The CDC Healthier Worksite Initiative has a great deal of information in this area. Tools, resources and planning checklists to implement a stairwell campaign can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/hwi/toolkits/physicalactivity.htm>

Walking Clubs/Groups

Establish a worksite walking club. Encourage employees to walk during breaks and lunch. Walking clubs provide employees with physical activity that is social and beneficial to their health. Walking improves flexibility and coordination, helps with weight management, reduces high cholesterol, lowers blood pressure, relieves symptoms of stress and depression, and reduces chronic disease risk factors.

Walking Meetings

According to the 2008 *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*, short increments of physical activity count towards the daily goal of 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity. Walking to the water cooler, to another office or during meetings increase an employee's physical activity. Encouraging co-workers to walk and talk rather than sit and talk for a meeting is a great way to support physical activity. Additionally, large group meetings can benefit from small group activities that allow a short walk to discuss options for a specific problem.

Stretch Breaks

Encourage employees to take periodic stretch breaks or do yoga at their workstation. Flexibility and balance are components of physical activity and promote healthy aging while reducing the risk of injuries. Check out Healthline for "The Ultimate "DeKercise Stretch Routine."

<http://www.healthline.com/health-slideshow/deskercise#1>

Provide Local Resources

Employees appreciate learning about free or paid opportunities for physical activity near their workplace or in their communities.

- Post local race schedules and events on your intranet or bulletin board
- Provide walking and biking maps for your surrounding area(s)
- Provide links on your intranet to local trails and walking paths
- Create a map from your worksite that identifies 1- and 2-mile walking loops
- Encourage walking and biking to work as a means of transportation:

Coordinate Discounted Memberships to Fitness/ Recreation Facilities

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/hwi/toolkits/fitnessclub/index.htm>

Celebrate & Recognize National Events that Support Physical Activity

Recognize National Employee Health and Fitness Day on the third Wednesday of May by sponsoring an event such as a 5K fun run/walk. Hold your event at lunch with a course mapped out and a few scheduled activities, such as a raffle or a pre-or post-stretch. Invite your local newspaper and/or radio station to cover the event.

Organization Sponsored Event

Sponsor a team of employees in a day race such as the "Race for the Cure." Co-workers at different ability levels can participate as a group. Working together for the common good in local fundraising events can make everyone feel great physically and emotionally. Remember to recognize these individuals for taking part in a community event.

Activity Clubs

Forming activity clubs can encourage employees with similar interests to get together for sports or recreation outside the office. These clubs can be formally or informally organized, depending

on a worksite's resources. They can be initiated or coordinated by interested employees, wellness committees, or through an onsite fitness center. Activity clubs can be formed around any fun physical activity such as basketball, bicycling, walking, softball, running or volleyball.

Recreation Leagues

Supporting a recreational league could become a productive element of your worksite wellness program. When a company sponsors outside sports competitions, it feeds employees' playfulness and competitiveness. League play can also provide opportunities for employees to manage stress in a non-threatening environment and find a level of success not easily obtainable in their everyday work. Local communities sponsor leagues for a variety of activities such as softball, bowling, tennis, volleyball and more. It is common for an organization to subsidize the team fee or pay a certain amount of individual fees up to a specified amount each year per employee.

Host a Tournament

Host a golf league or day tournament in which employees, their families, customers and vendors participate. Designate a schedule and place for the league. Participants pay their own course fees or co-pay depending on budget allotted. The company can provide the prizes. Everybody benefits from this program — the company gets advertising and publicity; participants have some relaxing fun with colleagues.

Dedicated Exercise Room

Employers can dedicate a small space such as an expanded cubicle or small conference room to provide fitness classes or set aside a larger space for a fitness center that might include cardiovascular equipment, weights, stretching areas or fitness class space. Providing facilities for exercise at the worksite sends a strong message regarding your dedication to improving employee health. To determine what to provide employees, consider adding questions to your employee needs survey about types of classes desired, types of equipment needed, willingness/ability to pay, etc.

Coordinate Wellness Challenges

Research shows that incentive-based programs help employees maintain positive behavior change and promote peer support and camaraderie in the workplace. Incentives generate interest in a wellness program, offer rewards for changed behavior, and promote the organization's belief in and commitment to wellness.

Physical Activity Wellness Challenges include the following components:

- Individual or team based
- 4-8 weeks in duration

- Designed to encourage more activity through the use of pedometers or tracking minutes or miles of activity
- Allow for multiple modes of activity including walking, running or biking
- Encourage different levels of participation, including beginner, intermediate and advanced
- Provide a tracking component to award points or tracks minutes
- Include health education materials and resources for employees to become more aware of the benefits of physical activity
- Include a program goal that includes total minutes, miles or days of activity achieved or tracks improvement from the beginning of the program
- Rewards individuals for participation, engagement and completion of program criteria

Health Communications and Marketing

Health messages for physical activity programs should include health awareness messages on the benefits of physical activity, motivational messages to encourage participation and celebratory messages to recognize incremental success. Short, to-the-point handouts, e-mail links or brown bag sessions can make employees aware of the health benefits of different types of physical activity. Bright, colorful flyers, e-mail reminders or meeting announcements can motivate employees to participate in program activities. Company and wellness committee leaders can celebrate group success at meetings or in newsletters or individual success through short oral or e-mail notes of congratulations and encouragement. Consider your audience and tailor your messages to physical activity and educational levels. Many publishers have designed out-of-the-box, camera-ready materials to promote physical activity. Research suggests that stair use can increase by as much as 54 percent with the use of motivational signage.

Motivational signs can inform employees about health and weight-loss benefits and remind them to become more active. Samples can be found at

http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/hwi/downloads/stairwell_messages.pdf

Remember to contact your local health department or regional health partner for information on Worksite Wellness. They can help you get started on planning and implementing your worksite wellness program.

Source: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment