

Worksite Wellness Policy

Purpose The Worksite Wellness Policy provides the foundation for state entities to develop activities and modify work environments and policies to support the health and well-being of state employees. In addition to the benefits for employees, positive benefits are likely to accrue to families of employees, resulting in better health for families and the community.

Policy In partnership with the Office of State Personnel (OSP) and the NC Department of Health and Human Services' Division of Public Health (DPH) each agency head has the responsibility to create and participate in a Worksite Wellness program within his or her own agency or university. The Worksite Wellness initiatives shall address the primary components of a healthy lifestyle including healthy eating, physical activity, tobacco use cessation, and stress management. The State Health Plan for Teachers and State Employees (SHP) and DPH have developed a Worksite Wellness model to assist agencies in the establishment of their programs.

Administration Advisory Role: OSP and the DPH, with assistance from the SHP and other state government partners, will guide and assist agencies in the development of a comprehensive Worksite Wellness Program for State employees. The NC HealthSmart Worksite Wellness Toolkit and Web site, available at <http://www.shpnc.org> will serve as a resource for administering and implementing the program.

Components Wellness Leader: Each agency head shall designate a Wellness Leader at the management level who has direct access to the agency head. In collaboration with management and employees, this person is responsible for creating a Worksite Wellness infrastructure overseeing the development and implementation of employee wellness policies and committees, and providing ongoing assessment/monitoring of the effectiveness of Worksite Wellness Programs.

Advisory Note: Recommended criteria for agencies to use in selecting a Wellness Leader and a list of responsibilities for Wellness Leaders can be found at <http://www.shpnc.org/worksite-wellness.html>. Leaders are responsible for completing annual Worksite Wellness Policy-related surveys and promoting completion of annual wellness surveys of agency wellness committees and employees.

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Components (continued)

Wellness Committees: Each agency shall establish a wellness committee infrastructure. A wellness committee is a team of employees that meet formally and have identified aims, goals, and implementation strategies to encourage healthy behaviors at the workplace, advocate for policy change, and create health-friendly work environments. A wellness committee should be comprised of employees who represent a cross section of the employee population. Multiple committees may be necessary depending on the size and number of locations of the agency.

Committee Chair(s) and Members Responsibilities: Committees should elect a wellness chair or co-chairs to conduct meetings and lead activities. Regarding time commitment, Committee members may need as much as four hours a month and the wellness chair(s) as much as six hours a month to plan and implement the agency's strategic wellness plan. (As appropriate, these activities should be included in an employee's work plan.)

For more information on establishing committees, organizations are encouraged to use the NC HealthSmart Worksite Wellness Toolkit found online at <http://www.shpnc.org/worksite-wellness.html>.

POLICY GUIDELINES

I. Creating an Employee Worksite Wellness Infrastructure

- (1) Measurable Wellness Program Objectives should be included in each agency's strategic plan and in employee work plans, as appropriate.
- (2) Financial Resources for Wellness Activities: Worksite Wellness programs should utilize available resources within State government and gratis/discounted services from the private sector as much as possible. In addition, State agencies and the legislature may provide fiscal support for wellness committees and activities.

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Advisory Notes: Wellness committees should be aware of State Ethics Commission guidelines regarding employees in certain types of state positions receiving donated items.

See http://www.ethicscommission.nc.gov/documents/GS_133-32.pdf.

Some state agencies, due to the scope of their fiscal or judicial role, may not be able to solicit donations from the private sector. Office of State Budget & Management (OSBM) approval will be needed by agencies to allocate funds for wellness programs.

- (3) Fund Raising: Wellness Committees throughout State government have permission to hold fund raising activities and solicit donations from vendors to support employee wellness programs.

Advisory Notes: It is recommended that organizations establish an internal approval process or define guidelines for approved types of fundraising activities. Raffles should be limited to no more than two per year for each agency or university wellness committee. Wellness committees may charge employees to cover costs associated with providing wellness classes or programs. Any funds collected for wellness activities should be deposited in an interest-bearing joint account held in the names of at least two staff members. Regarding solicitation of vendor donations see Advisory Note in (2) above.

- (4) Computer Access: State agencies, to the extent possible, should make computers and email accounts available to employees in order to facilitate health education, increased participation in employee wellness surveys, and access to Employee Assistance Programs; and SHP resources (i.e., NC HealthSmart).
- (5) Communication and Promotion: State entities should promote, at all levels of the organization, their wellness initiatives as well as other resources such as, the State Health Plan for Teachers and State Employees' NC HealthSmart services and benefit changes, Employee Assistance Programs, the NC Quitline, ergonomics programs, and other wellness-related programs available to employees. New State employees should receive information about the NC HealthSmart healthy living initiative and the agency's worksite wellness program during orientation.

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- (6) Quality and Accessibility: State entities should have a plan for routinely monitoring the quality of wellness programs provided and employee access to programs across all work sites. The Wellness Leader would be responsible for designing the evaluation plan and discussing findings with the agency staff. This is to ensure all employees receive the same level of services and supervisory support.

Advisory Note: Wellness leaders should ensure that an annual wellness plan with measurable objectives is developed by the wellness committee(s) and progress on meeting those objectives is monitored at least annually.

- (7) Liability Issues: The agency shall address liability issues depending on the nature of the wellness activity. Worksite wellness activities usually occur outside of work hours, for example, before and after work or at lunch time. Participation in wellness activities is voluntary; and, therefore, the State is not liable for injuries sustained to employees during their participation in these activities. As a general reference, injury that occurs during non-pay status is not compensable. Non-pay status is defined as before work, after work and non-paid time during the normal workday. State entities should inform employees of the above information.

Advisory Notes: Agencies should make every reasonable effort to ensure that equipment and areas for wellness activities do not present hazardous conditions. The agency Safety Officer should be involved in development of safety and maintenance guidelines for wellness areas. It is recommended that any fitness equipment, new or used, with moveable parts be light commercial or commercial grade quality. Used equipment should be examined prior to use by a technician to ensure that it is functioning correctly. Routine maintenance of all equipment with moveable parts should be scheduled at least annually with a technician familiar with servicing fitness equipment.

- (8) A sample liability release forms and signage language are available from the Office of State Personnel at <http://www.osp.state.nc.us/>.

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Advisory Notes: All employees shall be required to sign a liability release form before participating in worksite wellness activities. The liability release form covers organized and individual wellness activities at the workplace as well as team or organized wellness events held off campus. Signed forms should be kept in personnel files. It is recommended that the liability release form be included in new employee orientation packets. Signs should be posted in exercise areas reminding employees that participation is at their own risk and that any unsafe conditions should be reported immediately to the designated agency contact. It is advised that directions for the safe use of equipment also be posted in the area.

II. Supporting Employee Participation in Wellness Activities

- (1) Incentives from State Agencies: State agencies may provide employees with incentives for participating in wellness activities. This does not extend to offering incentive pay for performance. Both long and short-term incentives are appropriate to promote and sustain participation in worksite wellness activities.

Advisory Notes: Incentives may be offered to individual employees for participation in wellness activities, achievement of specific goals, or adherence to a wellness program. If agency funds are used, it is suggested that incentives be limited to a \$25 maximum value per award. Raffle prizes might exceed that amount. Alternatives should be offered for any employees unable to participate in a wellness program offering incentives for participation. Other equity and privacy issues related to the use of incentives in employee wellness programs are addressed by the federal ADA and HIPAA guidelines.

See <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/hipaageninfo/> and <http://www.ada.gov>.

It is recommended that agencies define acceptable guidelines or a process for management approval of incentives offered to employees. Wellness committees charging employees for classes and programs may, in addition to covering program costs, charge an additional amount that is refunded to participants upon completion of a program. In those situations it is advised that wellness committees have participants sign a consent form outlining the requirements and procedures for obtaining a refund of any money paid. Employees should be made aware of their IRS tax liability for any cash or gift card incentive and possibly for incentive items of significant value such as a gym membership received as a raffle prize. Incentive items of small value that are given infrequently are usually exempt.

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- (2) Wellness-related Vendors: State policy allows service providers, such as a weight management program, to offer programs to employees at the worksite during non-work hours, i.e. during lunch hours, or before or after the official workday of the employee, with the permission of the agency head or designee.

Advisory Notes: Wellness Programs should ensure that vendors providing wellness programs or services to employees have the recognized qualifications to provide such programs. See <http://www.shpnc.org/worksite-wellness.html> for guidance on selecting qualified vendors and responding to vendor solicitations. Wellness committees using funds from fund raising efforts or participant receipts are not required to use the state bid or contractual process in the selection of wellness vendors providing occasional wellness programs or activities for employees. State employees paid directly by other employees to provide occasional wellness classes during non-work hours are not considered as engaged in secondary employment.

See <http://www.osp.state.nc.us/manuals/manualindex.htm>.

III. Increasing Employee Levels of Physical Activity in the Workplace

Activity Space: Designation of space for wellness activities, including exercise, in state owned and leased office space is permissible and encouraged.

Advisory Notes: Permission to use designated office space in leased or state owned property for a wellness or fitness area must be requested from the Office of State Property, Department of Administration (DOA). Current statutes do not address the use of office space for wellness activities. Empty office space may be used on a temporary basis without permission. Approval from DOA is not required to include fitness areas as part of multi-use space such as storage, workrooms, or break areas.

IV. Improving Access to Healthier Food in the Workplace

- (1) Vending and Food Service: State entities are encouraged to make available healthy snacks/foods at catered events, in vending machines, in cafeterias, and in snack bars. For example, provide at least 15 to 20 percent healthier snacks in machines. Clear identification of healthy snacks is strongly encouraged.
- (2) Food Storage and Preparation: Environmental accommodations for food preparation and storage (e.g. sinks, refrigerators, microwaves) are encouraged to support employees in bringing healthy lunches and snacks to work.

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V. Reducing and Managing Stress in the Work Place

- (1) Stress Reduction and Management Training should be provided annually to managers and supervisors to improve their supervisory skills and to reduce conflict and stress in the work place and offered to employees who want to improve their time management and stress reduction skills.

Advisory Notes: Providing skill building opportunities for managers and employees have been shown to help reduce stress in the workplace. Wellness committees should include stress management programs as ongoing components of their wellness program. Agencies should encourage managers and supervisors to annually participate in training on management skills to reduce conflict and stress in the workplace.

- (2) Breaks and Lunch Time: State agencies are encouraged to ensure that employees are receiving time for lunch and for appropriate breaks from repetitive and stressful work functions during the workday to help prevent stress and injury.

Advisory Note: Providing comfortable break areas are important to reducing stress and supporting wellness among employees.

V Supporting Tobacco Cessation

- (1) State Laws Prohibiting Tobacco Use in Worksites: Ensuring employees understand and abide by these laws is an effective way to help those trying to quit tobacco use. Promoting cessation resources and offering cessation programs is highly recommended.

- (a) State law (S.L. 2007-193) prohibits smoking in state government buildings. The law became effective on January 1, 2008 and applies to all buildings owned and leased by the state, and any area of a building leased and occupied by the state. The prohibition applies to the use of any lighted tobacco product. The law also requires the person in charge of the building to post signs stating that smoking is prohibited. See <http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/Sessions/2007/Bills/House/HTML/H24v7.html> for a full text of law.

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- (b) A separate bill (S.L.2007-114) allows, as of January 1, 2008, the UNC system and its medical facilities to prohibit smoking in and around their buildings. The bill gives authority to the sixteen campuses of the UNC system to also prohibit smoking within **100 linear feet of a building** owned and occupied by the State, owned by the State but leased to a third party, or owned by a third party and leased to State government. Several UNC campuses have since passed policies prohibiting smoking on their campuses that range from 25 feet to 100 feet from buildings. The bill provides authority for UNC Chapel Hill and East Carolina also to prohibit smoking on **all** grounds and walkways of their medical facilities with an exception allowed for confined research-related smoking. See <http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/Sessions/2007/Bills/Senate/HTML/S862v5.html> for a full text of the law.
 - c. Session Law 2008-149, effective January 1, 2009, requires automobiles in the state motor fleet to be smoke free and authorizes local governments to require local government-owned vehicles to be smoke free. A link to the ratified bill is: <http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/Sessions/2007/Bills/Senate/HTML/S1681v4html>.
 - d. Session Law 2008-95, effective July 11, 2008, grants the local governing boards of community colleges the clear local authority and guidance to prohibit tobacco use on their community college campuses and college-sponsored events. See link to SL2008-95 at <http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/Sessions/2007/Bills/Senate/HTML/S1669v4.html>.
- (2) Tobacco Cessation Programs are available through the NC Quitline, some Employee Assistance Programs (EAP), and the NC State Health Plan. For tobacco use cessation:
- (a) NC Quitline: 1-800-QUIT-NOW. (1-800-784-8669). Offers free and confidential support from trained quit coaches 8AM to Midnight 7 days per week to all NC youth and adults who want to quit using tobacco. For those who have already called the Quitline there are additional web resources that can be accessed 24 hours a day.

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- (b) State Health Plan for Teachers and State employees' Benefits: Pharmaceutical tobacco cessation aids, including over-the-counter generic nicotine replacement therapy patches, and counseling benefits are covered. Plan members who want more information on these and other tobacco cessation resources are encouraged to visit www.shpnc.org.
 - (c) Employee Assistance Services (EAP): Most state agencies and universities provide EAP services for their employees and family members. Employees should contact their agency or university Human Resource Office to find out if EAP services are available.
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