

# WORKPLACE WELLNESS PROGRAMS



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# Getting Your Program Started

Once an organization decides it wants to implement a workplace wellness program, the first question is often, “What kinds of activities should we include?” Before you have that discussion, you should lay the groundwork for your program and gather more information. The following is a list of steps you can take to get your wellness program started.

## **Gain Support from Management**

Support from all levels of management is key to the success of your wellness program. To ensure the support of management, inform managers about the program early on and encourage them to participate. Communicate the program’s goals and benefits clearly and often. Gaining management support will ensure you have sufficient resources and staff time to develop your wellness program.

## **Assemble a Workgroup**

Your wellness workgroup is a committee responsible for promoting the workplace wellness program, planning activities, recruiting team leaders and conducting evaluations. The size of the workgroup will depend on the size of your company and the scope of the program or activities. The workgroup should be large enough to represent your workforce and should include staff that represents various departments, such as marketing, union representatives, human resources and administrative staff. If you already have a wellness or health promotion committee or other groups interested in taking on this role, involve them in the workgroup.

## **Designate a Coordinator**

Management or the workgroup should identify a wellness coordinator to oversee the program. Although members of the workgroup can share responsibilities, having one person in charge of coordinating efforts increases the likelihood the program is managed well. The level of success for a wellness program is often linked to the coordinator’s time and ability. It is important that some or all of the coordinator’s time be dedicated to the wellness program. If that is not possible, consider contracting with an outside party to provide assistance.

## **Schedule Workgroup Meetings**

The workgroup should meet regularly, at least on a quarterly basis. The workgroup may meet more often during peak times when planning or implementing new activities or programs. The frequency of meetings will depend on what the workgroup plans to accomplish.

## **Analyze Your Needs**

Complete a workplace environmental assessment and conduct an employee interest survey to collect information on the topics that would be of most interest to the staff. Set program priorities and plan initiatives based on the results of these assessments in order to improve your return on investment (ROI).



## **Develop an Action Plan**

Action plans should include specific goals and objectives, strategies to meet these goals, a timeline, a budget and an evaluation plan. If your goals are clearly identified, it will be easier to gauge the effectiveness of your wellness program.

## **Invest Accordingly**

Building a successful workplace wellness program requires time as well as money. Some larger organizations may spend 20 hours per week for three to six months preparing to launch a workplace wellness program.

Costs will fluctuate depending on whether costs are paid by you, employees, or the costs are shared. The Wellness Council of America estimates that a wellness program costs between \$100 and \$150 per employee each year, but can produce an ROI of between \$300 and \$450. Keep in mind that the ROI will likely be higher with more comprehensive programs.

## **Implement and Communicate the Plan**

You need an effective communications strategy to put your plan into motion and to encourage employee participation. In addition, be sure to educate employees so they understand why you are implementing a wellness program and what benefits they can gain from participating.

## **Evaluate Outcomes**

Periodically review your program goals and compare outcomes to your goals and objectives. Keep employees involved in the evaluation process and adjust programs and initiatives based on employee feedback and evaluation results.

Following the steps above and not rushing the planning process will make your workplace wellness program more successful in the end.

*Source: Wisconsin Worksite Wellness Resource Kit*



# WORKPLACE WELLNESS ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Use the checklist below to assess your workplace as well as to identify wellness program strengths and areas that need improvement.

#	Wellness Component	Yes	In Process	No	Potential Priority	Comments
<b>GENERAL</b>						
1	Do you have support from key stakeholders such as senior leadership, HR managers, safety officers, etc.?					
2	Do you currently have a policy outlining the requirements and functions of a comprehensive workplace wellness program?					
3	Do you have a committee that meets at least once a month to oversee your workplace wellness program?					
4	Do you have a workplace wellness plan in place that addresses the purpose, nature, duration, resources required and expected results of your program?					
5	Does your new employee orientation include an explanation of workplace wellness programs, and are new hires given copies of any physical activity, nutrition and tobacco use policies?					
6	Does the worksite offer educational programs for health areas such as physical activity, nutrition and tobacco cessation?					
7	Do you encourage employee participation in wellness programs? The following are ways to promote participation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information at orientation</li> <li>• Fliers or bulletin boards</li> <li>• Letters mailed to employees</li> <li>• Announcements at meetings</li> <li>• Employee newsletter articles</li> <li>• Incentive or reward programs</li> <li>• Public recognition</li> <li>• Health insurance discounts</li> <li>• Sponsor employee sports teams</li> </ul>					



#	Wellness Component	Yes	In Process	No	Potential Priority	Comments
8	Do you provide health counseling or other support mechanisms to modify behaviors?					
9	Do you offer adequate health care coverage for employees and their families for the prevention of and management of chronic disease?					
10	Is there a budget for employee health promotion that includes funds for programs or a portion of a salary for a coordinator?					

General areas totals (number of “yes,” “in process” and “no” items)

#### PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

11	Does your company culture discourage sedentary behavior, such as watching TV on breaks and sitting for long periods of time?					
12	Do you provide flexible scheduling so employees can make time for exercise?					
13	Are employees provided with breaks during working hours and encouraged to be active during those breaks?					
14	Does the company map out on-site or nearby walking trails?					
15	Does the company encourage employees to map their own biking or walking routes to and from work?					
16	Does the company allow for walk and- talk meetings instead of sit-down meetings to encourage activity?					
17	Do you provide exercise messages and information to employees?					
18	Do you provide prompts to promote physical activity near stairwells or elevators?					
19	Do you provide bike racks in safe and convenient locations?					
20	Do you provide showers or changing facilities?					
21	Do you provide outdoor exercise areas, playing fields or walking trails for employee use?					



#	Wellness Component	Yes	In Process	No	Potential Priority	Comments
22	Do you provide or support a broad range of competitive and noncompetitive physical activities that help develop the skills needed to participate in physical activities?					
23	Do you offer company-sponsored fitness programs or clubs for employees other than at an exercise facility?					
24	Do you provide free, discounted or employer subsidized memberships to fitness centers?					
25	Do you offer incentive-based programs to encourage activity (e.g., pedometer walking campaigns)?					
26	Do you provide on-site physical activity classes such as aerobics, kickboxing, yoga, etc.?					
27	Do you provide an on-site exercise facility?					
28	Do you provide incentives for engaging in physical activity (e.g., merchandise, coupons or cash)?					
29	Can employees use the worksite's indoor or outdoor physical activity facilities outside of work hours?					
30	Do you provide on-site childcare coverage to facilitate physical activity participation?					

Activity areas totals (number of "yes," "in process" and "no" items)

#### NUTRITION

31	Do you send healthy eating messages to employees (via email, messages, bulletin boards, etc.)?					
32	Do you promote the consumption of fruits and vegetables in catering and cafeteria policies through motivational signs, posters, etc.?					
33	Do you provide protected time and dedicated space away from the work area for breaks and lunch?					



#	Wellness Component	Yes	In Process	No	Potential Priority	Comments
34	Do you offer appealing, low-cost, healthy food options, such as fruits and vegetables in the vending machines, snack bars and break rooms?					
35	Do you promote healthy choices by increasing the number of healthy options that are available? Do you use competitive pricing to make healthy choices more economical?					
36	Does your on-site cafeteria follow healthy cooking practices?					
37	Does your on-site cafeteria set nutritional standards that align with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans?					
38	Do you label food to show appropriate serving size and calories, and provide employees with food models, pictures or portable food scales for weighing portion sizes?					
39	Do you offer healthy food options at meetings and company events?					
40	Do you make water available throughout the day?					
41	Do you make kitchen equipment (refrigerators, microwaves, stoves, etc.) available to employees for food storage and cooking?					
42	Do you offer locally grown fruits and vegetables on-site?					
43	Do you provide on-site gardening?					
44	Do you provide interactive food opportunities, such as taste-testing, food preparation skills and peer-to-peer modeling?					
45	Do you have workplace policies and programs that promote breastfeeding?					
46	Do you provide an appropriate place for breast-feeding or pumping?					
47	Do you provide lactation education programs?					
48	Do you provide incentives for participation in nutrition and weight management activities?					



#	Wellness Component	Yes	In Process	No	Potential Priority	Comments
49	Do you include the employees' family members in campaigns promoting fruit and vegetable consumption?					

Nutrition areas totals (number of "yes," "in process" and "no" items)

**HEALTH SCREENING AND DISEASE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT**

50	Do you offer health risk assessments?					
51	Do you offer easy access to free or reasonably priced health screenings?					

Screening areas totals (number of "yes," "in process" and "no" items)

**TOBACCO USE**

52	Do you prohibit tobacco use anywhere on your property?					
53	Do you post prompts or posters to support your no tobacco use policy?					
54	Do you promote the Tobacco Quit Line (800-QUIT-NOW)?					
55	Do you support participation in smoking cessation activities during work hours (flex time)?					
56	Do you provide counseling through an individual, group or telephone counseling program on-site?					
57	Do you provide individual, group or telephone counseling sponsored through your health plan?					
58	Are smoking cessation medications covered through your health plan?					

Tobacco areas totals (number of "yes," "in process" and "no" items)

**CARDIAC EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN**

59	Do you have a written plan for emergency response to cardiac events?					
60	Do you provide emergency training in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and/or automated external defibrillators (AEDs) for response to cardiac events?					

Cardiac Response areas totals (number of "yes," "in process" and "no" items)





Worksite Scorecard (totals of all categories)	Yes	In Process	No	Potential Priority	Comments
General (10)					
Physical Activity (29)					
Nutrition (19)					
Health Screening and Disease Prevention (2)					
Tobacco Use (7)					
Cardiac Emergency Response Plan (2)					
Worksite Total (60)					



## FAQs about Wellness Programs

When you are considering implementing a workplace wellness program, you may have a lot of questions. Below are some answers to frequently asked questions about wellness initiatives.

### **We can't do a comprehensive program right now, but is it still worth doing something?**

Absolutely—even a small activity can plant the seeds of success for your program to grow. Engage in some low-cost activities, like providing a health and wellness bulletin board or newsletter. You can also coordinate walking groups or encourage managers to hold walking meetings when it is nice outside. These small steps can promote a healthier workplace.

### **There is so much we could do in our program. Where do we start?**

After you have secured management support, researching the health needs of your employees is the best way to identify which activities will resonate most with your employees. Make sure the first programs you develop are fun and interactive, because they will be the first impression that employees get of your wellness program. Start with programs that have broad appeal instead of those that might only be of interest to a smaller, more targeted group. In addition, because there are many regulations governing workplace wellness programs, make sure to review legal considerations or consult with legal counsel before implementing a wellness program.

### **We have tried health and lifestyle programs but participation is small. What can we do?**

Keep trying, and be patient. It will take some time for your program to get going. Remember that, ultimately, you are trying to change workplace culture, and change is a process that happens slowly over time.

One approach that has proven successful for employers, though, is to offer incentives for participation or attendance. For instance, you could offer free healthy snacks if employees attend a wellness meeting. Another approach is to invite people in the organization who are well-liked and respected to participate in your program in the hopes that it will encourage other employees to join as well.

### **We have a lot of work to do in the area of nutrition. How can we avoid getting the reputation of being the “food police”?**

In educational sessions, talk about the health issues around fats, added sugars and portion sizes, but avoid demonizing unhealthy foods. If people feel like they are being attacked for their lifestyle habits, they may be reluctant to participate in future wellness initiatives.

Instead, empower employees by teaching them the benefits of healthy eating and the positive impact it can have on their life (more energy, better sleep, etc.). Encourage employees to add more healthy foods to their diets and make healthy foods available at work to encourage employees to grab an apple rather than buy a candy bar out of the vending machine. As employees begin to eat healthier, they will notice how unhealthy foods make them feel sluggish, and they will begin to avoid them on their own.



**CEO and leadership support is important, but they will probably never come to lunch-and-learns or walking groups. How can we show their support to employees?**

Some of the best support management can provide is HR and financial resources for the program. Endorsing a policy change that supports wellness is another important type of high level support. In addition, you can plan a program kick-off and have leadership visibly present and participating. Get the event on their calendars early, or ask leadership to write a short email or intranet post that demonstrates their excitement about the wellness initiative.

**Some employees are suspicious about the motives of the program. What can we do about it?**

Employees may be hesitant to share their health information and participate in wellness activities because they may feel like employers shouldn't be monitoring their health. Wellness programs may also cause unhealthy employees to become nervous about their job security, especially if your company has recently gone through downsizing.

The most important thing you can do to curtail suspicion is to encourage honest, open communication. Tell your employees not only what you are planning, but also why you are doing it. Discuss the benefits of wellness programs for the company and for the employees. You can mention the high cost of health care as an incentive for creating the program, but also talk about how you value your employees' well-being and want to equip them with the resources to live healthy lives. Reassure them that their personal health information will be protected and only used for wellness purposes.

*Source: Wisconsin Worksite Wellness Resource Kit*

