

Manual for Developing a Worksite Wellness Plan



Building Healthy Texans

Statewide Agency Wellness Program

Introduction

No employee is immune to the risks of chronic disease. Healthy behaviors such as physical activity, good nutrition, and stress reduction can reduce the risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, diabetes,



overweight, and some cancers. More and more, employers recognize that helping their employees make healthier lifestyle choices makes good business sense. By providing a supportive environment that offers access to health education programs, value-based benefits, safe and health-friendly facilities, and sound policies, employers can improve the health and productivity of their employees and also create a healthier, more productive business.

This guide can serve as a basic start for developing an employee wellness plan. It is accompanied by an outline to comprehensively assess, plan, and implement programs, policies, and supportive changes within the work setting. Capturing the unique details of individual agency wellness programs will require adapting and adding to the outline.

**For more information, state agency wellness planners
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Worksite Wellness Plan

Developing a wellness plan is an occasion to learn more about the needs and priorities of employees. Employers become champions for health by offering employees the opportunity to enhance the quality and length of their lives.



Outline of the Program Plan Activities and Evaluation

Section 1 - General Information

Program Overview

A brief overview of the organization's program should describe the overall purpose and goal. The overview will describe what the organization intends to accomplish by implementing the program.

Example:

- A. *A voluntary program of structured activities for its administrators and employees, the (name of organization) employee wellness program is designed to result in an increase in the general level of their health and fitness.*

Participation Requirements

The program plan should consider and explicitly state the organization's policies and procedures, such as personnel policies.

Examples:

- A. *Eligibility requirements.*
 - 1. *Eligibility for voluntary participation by administrators and employees (full- and part-time) in program activities*
 - 2. *Eligibility of spouses and other immediate family members of administrators and employees to participate in selected program activities, as determined by the organization's chief executive officer or his/her designate*

Employee Assessment

Determining what programs offer should include evidence that employees' needs and interests have been considered in planning program objectives. Assessing employees' needs and interests assists planners in identifying what, when, and how employees will access health programs. Other assessments can provide insight into persons' lifestyle habits and health claims, providing the ability to target programs to the employees with the most pressing needs. A description of the information learned will provide justification to management for the implementation of specific activities.

Examples:

- A. *Survey tools*
- B. *Focus groups*
- C. *Health risk assessments*
- D. *Health claims data review*

Use of Facilities

A description of the use of available facilities for health fitness or educational programs should be included to provide guidance on what is allowable at the worksite.

Examples:

- A. *Conference or meeting rooms*
- B. *Auditoriums*
- C. *Showers*
- D. *Lockers*
- E. *Outdoor areas suitable for instruction or fitness activities*

Providers of Instruction/Services

An organization may consider contracting with qualified providers of instruction and services related to their program. Qualified personnel within an organization may also be available to serve as health fitness instructors and activity leaders, when appropriate. If internal employees are allowed to provide services, the organization should state any limitations regarding the use of work time to provide those services.

Examples:

- A. *Local, state, or federal agencies*
- B. *Hospitals*
- C. *Medical care professionals*
- D. *Health educators*
- E. *Nutritionists*
- F. *Dietitians*
- G. *Exercise physiologists*
- H. *Community organizations*
- I. *Consultants*
- J. *Other individuals or groups with expertise in the health fitness area*

Section 2 - Program Content



Employee wellness program plans should address both formal and informal activities. Some activities will have costs involved while others will not; some will be conducted during normal working hours while others will not.

Formal program activities should focus on evidence-based practices outlined in the Building Healthy Texans Model Wellness Program. Priority objectives should focus on:

- A. *Increasing the use of preventive screenings and services*
- B. *Improving healthy eating among employees*
- C. *Increasing physical activity among employees*
- D. *Improving tobacco prevention and cessation policies and benefits*
- E. *Improving stress management among employees*
- F. *Increasing the use of Employee Assistance Program benefits*
- G. *Improving support for mothers who choose to breastfeed*

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The Wellness Activities page on the Building Healthy Texans Web Site, www.wellness.state.tx.us, contains descriptions, guidance and model programs for each of these objectives.

When developing the program content, the employee assessment information gathered from focus groups or surveys will help determine those activities that will produce the desired effect.

Generally, informal activities are coordinated by employees with a special interest in some aspect of a health-related topic but not necessarily included as part of an organization's formal employee wellness program. Wellness planners can help promote and encourage participation in these activities.

Program Objectives, Expected Results, and Evaluation

The primary goal of each organization's program should be stated clearly so that both management and employees understand the reason for investing their time and resources in the activities. The goal might include management goals of reducing health care costs or improving morale, or health goals such as reducing the incidence of heart attacks or back injuries. The primary goal will be long term and will probably require a significant amount of effort over at least five years.

The organization's plan should include measurable objectives which allow the program to accomplish its goal and are stated to show expected results from the program. The plan should include objectives in three categories: process, impact, and outcome.

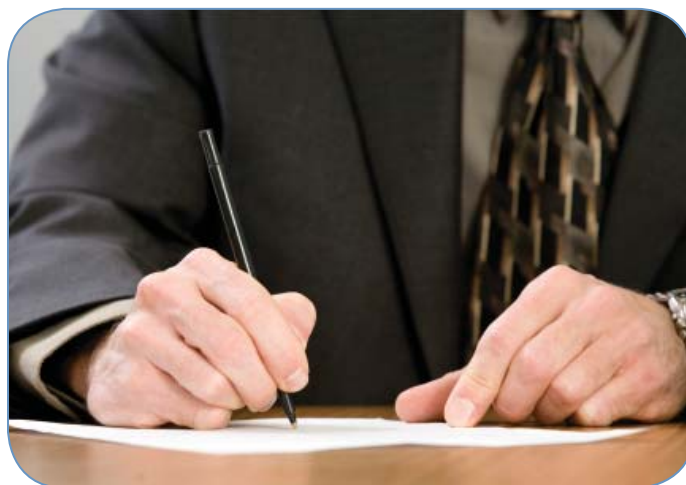
Process objectives are measurable, short term statements of what the program will do, such as "By Date/Month/Year, the Employee Wellness Program will recruit 50 percent of agency employees to participate in health screenings for risk factors related to cardiovascular disease to increase their knowledge about health risks and healthy behaviors."

Impact objectives are measurable, mid-term statements of what the program expects to happen as a result of its activities, such as "By Date/Month/Year, increase by 5 percent, from ____ to ____ the number of employees who participate in moderate to vigorous exercise for at least 30 minutes per day five days per week."

Outcome objectives are measurable, long term statements of what the program expects will result from the implementation of the program, such as "By Date/Month/Year, decrease by 5 percent, from ____ to ____, the number of employees who self-report as overweight or obese."

Evaluation

The program plan should address program evaluation. Plans for evaluating the program will be made when the program objectives are set. Sophisticated, controlled studies and evaluations are unlikely to be appropriate for most organizations, unless a comprehensive and relatively expensive program is being undertaken.



Measures should be selected which allow the organization to determine if its objectives were met. Assessment of employee needs/interests/health risks before offering a program will allow for development of a baseline against which future measurements can be compared. Determining the number and types of employees who participate in programs, the skills or knowledge gained as a result of participation, and other simple techniques can allow for formative evaluation to occur during the program and adjustments to be made to ensure success.

- I. **Process evaluation measures.** Process evaluation measures could include the number and types of health education events held, number of employees participating in the events, number of calls or requests for more information, etc.
- II. **Impact evaluation measures.** Impact evaluation measures could include the number and types of fitness classes held, number or participants in the classes, pre and post health assessment information, type of policies or system changes supporting the program made in the organization, etc.

- III. **Outcome evaluation measures.** Outcome evaluation measures could include the number of employees showing a reduction in medical risk conditions, reduced absenteeism, improved morale, etc.

Program Categories

Most wellness program activities will target one or more of the following three levels: Awareness, Lifestyle Change, and Supportive Environment. The program plan should identify activities from all three levels to be considered a comprehensive program:



- I. **Awareness.** An awareness program increases the employees' level of awareness or interest in the topic of the program. Such programs often result in increased knowledge about healthy behavior and can effectively boost morale and publicize the program to a large number of employees. These types of activities are also an inexpensive way to begin a wellness program.
- A. *Examples:*
1. *Newsletters*
 2. *Posters*
 3. *Health fairs*
 4. *One-time education classes*
 5. *Brown bag seminars*
 6. *Health screening without ongoing follow-up*
- II. **Lifestyle change.** Lifestyle change programs are intended to change the health behaviors of the employee. Health education and behavior modification are two common methods. Such programs should continue at least 8 to 12 weeks to have any long-term impact.
- A. *Examples:*
1. *Ongoing fitness classes*
 2. *Regular meetings of weight loss groups*
 3. *Extended stress management education*
 4. *Periodic health screenings with ongoing follow-up*
- III. **Supportive environment.** A supportive environment program aims to create a worksite environment that encourages healthy lifestyles. The major elements of that environment are the physical setting, departmental policies and culture, ongoing programs and structure, and employee involvement in programs.

A. *Examples:*

1. *Adopting a wellness policy*
2. *Adopting a tobacco-free policy*
3. *Offering fitness rooms and showers*
4. *Stocking vending machines with healthy food*

Physical Fitness Readiness Survey and Informed Consent



If vigorous physical activity is part of an organization's program plan, the organization should consider requiring that all employees who wish to participate first complete a physical fitness readiness questionnaire. This questionnaire will help determine which employees require consultation with a physician before beginning vigorous activity. Further, all employees participating in vigorous physical activity should have signed a statement of informed consent. The legal department of the organization should be consulted for wording and format of the appropriate forms. Samples of each of these forms are available on the Wellness Resources page of the Building Healthy Texans Model Wellness Program Web Site, www.wellness.state.tx.us.

Program Costs

Identifying, at any point in time, all the activities which may be appropriate in conducting a successful employee wellness program is not always possible. However, developing a budget that outlines the approximate costs for implementing such a program in general is important. The budget should be proposed to the organization's chief officers to identify what is required to

carry out the organization's employee wellness program and should be built into the organization's business plan.

The following areas should be considered in the budget outline when developing the costs of the program:

- A. Equipment and supplies which are needed for carrying out the program
- B. Personnel and/or training costs
- C. Incentives and awards may be provided for employees who participate in an organization's employee wellness program.

1. *Examples of such incentives and awards:*

- a. *award ribbons*
- b. *certificates*
- c. *tee-shirts*
- d. *other low-cost items of recognition*

- D. Treatment or screening services that may not be included in an employees' health insurance program
- E. Onsite medical screenings, immunizations, or preventive services
- F. Any other support costs, such as educational materials, self-monitoring equipment, printing costs, etc.

Cost sharing results in a high degree of commitment by participants. An organization may choose to cover 100 percent of the costs of certain program activities, to share the costs of some activities with participating employees, or to have employees pay 100 percent of the costs associated with certain program activities such as massage therapy or fitness classes. Cost sharing should be addressed in the wellness plan.

Program Scheduling

Program activities may be scheduled before, during, between, or after normal working hours as deemed appropriate by each organization. In scheduling wellness activities, wellness planners should consider the type of activity, the flexibility of employee schedules, and willingness of employees to attend at the scheduled time.

A successful employee wellness program will require appropriate planning, coordination, and implementation. An organization wishing to have a successful program should designate an employee wellness coordinator.

Program Coordination

A successful employee wellness program will require appropriate planning, coordination, and implementation. An organization wishing to have a successful program should designate an employee wellness coordinator who would devote a percentage of his or her on-duty time to the effort. Midsize and large organizations should also create a wellness committee to coordinate their

wellness program and help ensure equitable wellness opportunities across the agency. It is unlikely that a successful program can be administered on a strictly volunteer basis outside of working hours. The success of an employee wellness program requires buy-in and support from agency leadership, which includes dedication of available resources.

Organizations may want to seek opportunities to collaborate or enter into agreements with other state agencies in their area that offer access to wellness activities, programs or facilities. Such cooperation can be particularly useful when benefits cannot be offered by a single worksite, but may be possible through combining resources or cooperative use of facilities.