

# WORKPLACE WELLNESS

Provided by Rinehart, Walters & Danner



## An Employer's Guide to Promoting Wellness in the Workplace

The purpose of a wellness program is to promote healthy lifestyle initiatives, which can include smoking cessation programs, on-site gyms, healthy food initiatives, wellness education and more. While some businesses have instituted comprehensive health programs, others have achieved savings and increased productivity with just a few simple activities that promote healthy behaviors.

### Why Promote Wellness in the Workplace?

Workplace wellness is an investment in your most important asset—your employees. Studies have shown that employees are more likely to perform well when they are in optimal health. The following are the potential benefits of implementing a workplace wellness program:

- Lower health care costs, due to a healthier workforce and improved disease management
- Enhanced recruiting by attracting the most talented workers
- Reduced absenteeism
- Improved on-the-job time utilization, decision-making and productivity
- Improved employee morale
- Reduction in turnover

### Best Practices When Developing a Wellness Plan

The Wellness Council of America (WELCOA), an organization dedicated to the promotion of worksite wellness, has identified seven best practices for employers to follow when building a workplace wellness program.

1. **Gain senior-level support.** A commitment from the top is key to the success of any wellness initiative. Management must understand the benefits of a wellness program for both the employees and the organization, and be willing to commit sufficient funding.
2. **Create a wellness team.** Wellness teams should include a variety of people from all levels of your company. These individuals will drive program development, implementation and evaluation. Consider recruiting employees from HR, legal, marketing, management and administrative staff.
3. **Collect data that will drive your health initiatives.** Gathering data to assess employee health interests and risks will help you develop your program. This process may involve conducting a survey of employee interest in various health initiatives and health risk assessments (HRAs) to determine your current employees' disease risk.
4. **Craft an annual operating plan.** An annual operating plan is important for your program's success and should include a mission statement along with specific, measurable short- and long-term goals and objectives. A written plan provides continuity when members of the wellness committee change and is instrumental in holding the team accountable to the goals, objectives and timeline agreed upon.
5. **Choose appropriate health initiatives.** The health initiatives that you choose should flow naturally from your data (survey and HRA aggregate report), be cohesive with your goals and objectives and make sure they are in line with what both management and employees want from a wellness program.
6. **Create a supportive environment.** A supportive environment provides employees with encouragement, opportunity and rewards. Your workplace should celebrate and reward health achievements and have a management team that models healthy behavior. Most importantly, be sure to involve employees in various aspects of the wellness program, including in its design, implementation and evaluation.
7. **Consistently evaluate your outcomes.** Evaluation involves taking a close look at your goals and objectives to determine whether you achieved your desired results. Evaluation allows you to celebrate goals that have been achieved and to discontinue or change ineffective initiatives.

### Developing an Operating Plan

One feature that successful workplace wellness programs share is an outcome-oriented operating plan. An operating plan is important to your business for the following reasons:

- It links wellness initiatives to company needs and strategic priorities.
- It legitimizes the program, which increases the likelihood of continued resources and support.
- It provides continuity for the program when personnel changes occur.

- It serves as a means to evaluate the effectiveness of the program.

Your operating plan should contain the following elements:

- **Vision Statement.** All successful and long-lasting wellness programs have clear vision or mission statements. This statement should include the values that drive the program along with the ultimate goals or accomplishments the program hopes to achieve. The following is a sample wellness program vision statement:
  - *Our goal is to improve the health and well-being of ABC Company employees through health education and activities that support healthy lifestyles; thereby, resulting in improved employee productivity, morale and health care cost savings.*
- **Goals.** Goals are the long-term accomplishments to be achieved from the program. Goals should be realistic, reflect the needs of both management and employees, and flow naturally from the data collected. Goals should include clear time limits, so it is easy to determine whether they have been accomplished. The following is an example of a wellness program goal:
  - *ABC Company will reduce the prevalence of employee smoking from 35 percent to 25 percent by the end of the next fiscal year.*
- **Objectives.** Objectives are the strategies you will implement to achieve your goals. Like goals, they should include specific action steps and timelines, and be written so that it is clear whether they have been accomplished. The following are examples of objectives that support the sample goal above:
  - *By 'x' date, ABC Company will implement a smoke-free workplace policy.*
  - *By 'x' date, ABC Company will offer all employees a health risk assessment and will use that information to develop a smoking cessation program by 'x' date.*
- **Timeline.** Develop a realistic timeline to implement and evaluate your program. The timeline will incorporate key dates contained in the objectives and goals. Wellness initiatives generally begin at the start of the year when people are making New Year's resolutions. They are then remarketed at least twice throughout the year. Wellness activities should be scheduled at times that are convenient for all participants, so it may be necessary to offer multiple sessions, including evening sessions.
- **Budget.** It takes resources to implement a wellness program. Your budget may include items like salaries, program materials, administrative needs, outside vendors, evaluation and the costs associated with incentives. A detailed budget is essential during the evaluation process so you can compare program costs to outcomes.
- **Communication Plan.** You must communicate your program to raise employee awareness of the program and drive participation. Your operating plan should

address the types of marketing efforts that will be used to inform employees about your wellness plan. Specific communication techniques will vary depending on the size of your company and your budget. The following are effective but low-cost communication methods:

- *Involve employees in the planning and implementation process.*
- *Involve the company president to encourage participation.*
- *Use email, intranet postings, bulletin boards and company newsletters.*
- *Make the program fun by using a creative name and providing incentives.*
- **Implementation Plan.** This section of the operating plan will provide detailed information about implementing workplace wellness initiatives and will assign individual responsibilities associated with the offerings.
- **Evaluation Plan.** The final section should address how you will measure the success of your program. Ideally, evaluation will include measuring how well the program is working and whether it is achieving its expected results. Participation rate, participant evaluations and surveys are all good evaluation tools. Below is an evaluation using the goals and objectives mentioned above:
  - *Did the prevalence of smoking decrease by 10 percent by the end of the fiscal year? If not, why not? Was the goal realistic? Does the timeline need to be adjusted and objectives revised?*

By developing an effective workplace wellness program, your company can lower health care costs, increase productivity and boost employee morale. All of which can contribute to protecting the company's bottom line and keeping employees happy.

For more information on the Wellness Council of America, visit WELCOA's website at [www.welcoa.org](http://www.welcoa.org).