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B Resource Guide:
Creating an Employee Wellness Program



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I. Definition of Employee Wellness

Employee Wellness Programs are services focused on the promotion or maintenance of good health rather than the correction of poor health.ⁱ Employee Wellness Programs are designed to concentrate on preventive health care rather than reactive health care that could raise insurance rates.

In 2003, the Employee Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA) adopted the following definition of Employee Wellness:

“A set of organized activities and systematic interventions, offered through corporations/worksites, managed care organizations, and governmental/community agencies, whose primary purposes are to provide health education, identify modifiable health risks, and influence health behavior changes.”ⁱⁱ

Components of Employee Wellness

1. Stress Management
2. Mental Health
3. Fitness
4. Nutrition
5. Work/Life Balance

II. Why Have an Employee Wellness Program?

A. Benefits to the Company

Implementing an Employee Wellness Program can be beneficial for a company because a healthier work force can reduce insurance costs and improve employee productivity. Employee wellness programs can help reinforce employee loyalty. According to a study conducted by OptumHealth, 82 percent of employees stated that working at companies that place importance on employee health by having health and wellness programs would encourage them to stay longer at the companyⁱⁱⁱ.

There are also monetary benefits to a company when they implement an Employee Wellness Program. Johnson & Johnson estimate that their health and wellness program had an ROI of

health care costs of \$2.71 for every dollar spent between 2002 and 2008.

In a separate 6-month study conducted by Dr. Richard Milani and Dr. Carl Lavie that included 185 employees and their spouses from a single employer found that medical claim costs declined by an average of \$1,421 per participant.^{iv}

Legislation for employee wellness programs has been passed in 16 states and are pending in three more.^v The legislation in many of the states includes incentives and grants for companies that have their employees participate in employee wellness programs. To find out more about the laws in your state, please go to the website for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at: <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/DNPALeg/index.asp>.

B. Barriers to Success

There are many reasons why employees do not participate in Employee Wellness Programs. Employee Wellness Programs should be designed to combat these barriers to success and encourage employee participation. A lot of employees are worried that taking advantage of employee wellness programs will make them look weak, sick, and non-productive. They feel that the company will judge them for not working hard enough. They are also worried that any screenings that are done could reveal things that could make them less appealing for promotions and important assignments. Another barrier to the success of an employee wellness program is that employees do not know that the services are available.

Employers can break through these barriers in a variety of ways. Managers should be involved with the program and make it clear to employees that involvement in an employee wellness program will have no negative impacts. Managers should encourage group exercise during the day and participate in the group exercise. If bosses make more time for exercise, employees will feel less guilty about it. Employees should be made aware of available services. This can be done by posting on a board, talking about available services in staff meetings, and emailing information to all employees on a regular basis. Incentives, such as gift cards or extra vacation days can be offered for participating in the employee wellness program and for meeting individual wellness goals.

III. Developing Your Program

A. Helpful Resources

Your insurance carrier is often a good starting point for developing a program that is appropriate for your company. It's in their interest - the healthier your employees are, the fewer claims they'll file – so ask your insurance company if they can help you.

Additionally, there are several websites that offer free resources and tools for health risk assessments and other aspects of wellness programs. Health risk assessments can be strongly encouraged for all employees but cannot be required. See below in the Privacy section in the Sample Employee Wellness Policy for more information.

http://www.wellnessproposals.com/wellness_proposals_guide_to_worksite_wellness.htm
<http://www.healthstatus.com/>
http://www.bcbstx.com/employer/health_wellness.htm

<http://www.livestrong.com/>
<https://www.411fit.com/411fit/public/index.cfm?>

B. Put it in Writing

A health and wellness program policy is an essential tool to communicate your policy and make the policy accessible to all employees. Craft a policy statement to cultivate the expectation that it is the responsibility of all employees to create and maintain a healthy work environment. Make sure disability considerations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act have also been built into the wellness manual.

C. Creating a Culture of Wellness

It's important to create processes and incentives that allow wellness practices to be internalized and constant improvement to be encouraged. In this way, employees will feel encouraged to participate in and enjoy the health and wellness program.

Structure your program around five elements:

1. Alignment with the company's identity
 - a. Create programs that align with company goals (e.g. participation in a race that raises money for a charity that the company supports)
 - b. Involve employees by asking them what type of activities and programs they would like (e.g. lunch and learns, walk breaks, race training, stress relief programs)
2. Scope, Relevance, and Quality
 - a. Health and Wellness Programs should focus on fitness, nutrition, stress management, and work-life balance
 - b. Health Risk Assessments are good tools for lifestyle measures
 - c. Use employee surveys to make sure the program is utilized
 - d. Offer incentives
3. Accessibility of the Program
 - a. Create or use online resources for keeping track of goals
 - b. Offer low or no cost services
 - i. Arrange discounts at local businesses (e.g. spas, gyms, nutritionists, etc.)
 - c. Make the wellness program convenient for employees to use
4. Communication
 - a. Provide wellness scorecards for employee use.
 - b. Provide incentives to participants for reaching goals (e.g. comp time, gift cards)
 - c. Recognize employees who reach goals (e.g. "Health and Wellness Employee of the Month")
 - d. Use emails, bulletin boards, and meetings to promote the program
5. Wellness Managers
 - a. Appoint someone to manage the program and create different events
 - b. Ask for wellness champions to offer encouragement, education, mentoring
 - c. Ask employees to organize events they would be interested in (e.g., an employee who is a runner could organize a group run)

IV. Examples from B-Corps

B-Corporations employ several employee wellness practices that can be incorporated by companies creating their own practices and policy.

Stress Management

- *Offers yoga:* gDiapers, Source 44, King Arthur Flour, Singlebrook Technology, Sungevity Solar Home Specialists, iContact, Wendel, Rosen, Black and Dean
- *Does onsite gardening:* Solbery Worldwide, TS Designs
- *Provides massages:* Dolphin Blue, Context Travel, iContact
- *Has an office-wide stretch break everyday:* King Arthur Flour

Mental Health

- *Offers 5 health days per year (in addition to vacation/sickness days):* Badger

Fitness

- *Provides free/discounted gym memberships:* Cascade Engineering, IceStone, King Arthur Flour, Singlebrook Technology
- *Gives Reimbursements for fitness activities (including participation in sporting events, bicycles, and education):* Hypenotic, Modo Design Group, King Arthur Flour, Bamboo Sushi, Trililibrium, Context Travel
- *Offered half marathon training coaching:* King Arthur Flour
- *Company sponsored running program:* iContact
- *Lunchtime running group:* Method
- *Arranged for Adidas employee pricing:* Bamboo Sushi
- *Arranges weekly company walk to lunchtimes:* Source 44
- *Did a barter exchange with a local trainer who conducts a class once a week with employees:* Carter Law Group
- *Employee-led daily fitness class:* iContact

Nutrition

- *Provides organic fruit and other healthy snacks in the office:* Source 44, IceStone, Sungevity Solar Home Specialists
- *Offers nutrition newsletters and lectures:* Solbery Worldwide, Dolphin Blue
- *Does an office Recipe Share:* Source44
- *Works with a nutritionist to make healthy choices and lead seminars:* Method
- *Offers juicing classes:* Sungevity Solar Home Specialists
- *Provides healthy lunch options:* Badger
- *Company hosted CSA program:* iContact
- *Weight Watchers Meetings:* Wendel, Rosen, Black and Dean

Work/Life Balance

- *Allows Dogs in the workplace:* Eco-Bags Products, Inc., Dolphin Blue
- *Encourages Regular Work Hours:* Eco-Bags Products, Inc.
- *Allows Flexible Work Locations:* IdeaEncore Network
- *Offered a 2 week leisure trip to an exotic location after 5 years of employment:* Context Travel
- *Offers time off to "field test" products:* Go Lite

Goal Management

- *Offers a program called "Strive for Five" to encourage employees to set and achieve five personal wellness goals:* Cascade Engineering
- *Offers Weeks of Wellness Programs:* Cascade Engineering
- *Organizes company outings that have a focus on fitness:* Eco-Bags Products, Inc., Evergreen Lodge
- *Company-wide competitions-* iContact
- *Wellness Day:* iContact
- *Conducts biometric testing:* Cascade Engineering, King Arthur Flour, iContact

V. Sample Employee Wellness Policy

A. General Policy Statement

The company encourages employees to take advantage of programs and activities of interest that are aimed at realizing one's optimal health. The policy recognizes that healthy employees and programs that support the promotion of their health can help reduce health benefit costs, absenteeism and decreased productivity. The company will engage employees in developing, implementing, monitoring, and reviewing nutrition, stress management, work/life balance, and fitness policies. A wellness program committee will be formed to promote health and wellness.

Legal requirements: The company will comply with all legal obligations in each of the jurisdictions where it operates. This may give rise to local variations in corporate wellness provisions.

Privacy: All employee medical data is considered as sensitive and will be handled in confidence on a strict 'need to know' basis. The only standard types of health data that the company retains on its general human resource records are as follows: a brief 'fitness for work' statement from a physician or other health professional, details of the number of days absent attributable to sickness, maternity or industrial injury, and any further details that may be required to comply with disability legislation. If the company wishes to obtain a medical report from your doctor, it will first seek your consent. You may ask to see the report and request amendments before it is supplied to the company. Any health risk assessments that are offered are optional and results are not shared with the company, only with the employee. Any specific wellness program data (e.g. health status, goals, etc.) that is deemed private to the employee will be kept private and not shared with the company.

A healthy working environment: The company does not permit smoking, the use of narcotic stimulants or the consumption of alcohol in any of its premises, or in public places near entrances to company premises. We reserve the right to search staff if we believe they are carrying alcohol or illegal substances into the workplace. Drug and alcohol testing is carried out on a random basis for all those required to drive on the company's behalf, operate equipment for which there is significant health and safety risk, or act as a representative of the company to customers, suppliers, or the public. We also reserve the right to carry out testing if there is reasonable evidence that substance abuse may have occurred. Any proven instance of dealing in illegal substances by staff will be subject to instant dismissal for gross misconduct.

B. Employee Wellness Procedures

Stress Management: The overall goal of stress management for the company is to promote the integration of stress management while at work. We will:

1. Help the employee to identify sources of stress by keeping a stress journal to document stress
2. Provide information about healthy ways to manage stress.
3. Encourage the employee to say "no" to added responsibilities without fear of repercussions if the employee feels overwhelmed.
4. Encourage employees to express feelings about stressors through confidential mechanisms and share how the company is addressing these concerns broadly.
5. Provide education and workshops about time management.
6. Encourage employees to take walks and breaks to help manage stress.
7. Encourage employees to listen to calming music while working.
8. Provide a company break area.
9. Encourage employees to use alternative methods for transportation to get to work.
10. Promote stress management throughout the work environment by displaying posters, emailing information, and posting it in common areas.
11. Arrange for stress management seminars and the posting of stress management tips on company websites.

Mental Health: The overall goal of mental health for the company is to promote the integration of mental health while at work. We will:

1. Encourage employees to seek help from trained professionals for mental health problems.
2. Retain a professional Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider.
3. Promote mental health throughout the work environment by displaying posters, emailing information, and posting it in common areas.
4. Arrange for mental health seminars and the posting of stress management tips on company websites.

Fitness: The overall goal of fitness for the company is to promote the integration of fitness while at work. We will:

1. Provide time during the work day for stretching and walking around.
2. Encourage employees to do a fitness activity during lunch and expand lunch to last an hour to allow for such activities.
3. Encourage employees to use alternate methods for transportation to work, such as walking, biking, or running.
4. Provide a place to shower and change for fitness activities.
5. Organize weekly/monthly fitness activities for the whole company to participate in.
6. Offer free/reduced cost gym memberships and/or subsidize the cost of sports or fitness equipment.
7. Integrate fitness information and activities into the culture of the company.
8. Promote fitness throughout the work environment by displaying posters, emailing information, and posting it in common areas.
9. Arrange for fitness seminars and the posting of fitness tips on company websites.

Nutrition: The overall goal for nutrition for the company is to promote the integration of healthy eating habits while at work. We will:

1. Provide healthy snack options in vending machines and/or in the kitchen for all

employees.

2. Integrate nutrition information and education with the help of credentialed nutrition professionals.
3. Ensure healthy snacks and foods are served in meetings.
4. Provide time for employees to meet with nutritionists during work hours.
5. Promote nutrition awareness throughout the work environment by displaying posters, emailing information, and posting it in common areas.
6. Arrange for healthy eating seminars, posting nutrition tips on company websites, and providing nutrient analyses of meals and snacks served at the workplace.

Work/Life Balance: The overall goal of work/life balance for the company is to promote the integration of work/life balance while at work. We will:

1. Encourage employees to arrive and leave at reasonable hours.
2. Allow employees to bring friendly, well-behaved pets to work.
3. Encourage employees to take breaks away from their computers during the day.
4. Help employees with errands, by allowing time during the day to attend medical appointments, go to the bank, etc., without penalty and within reason.
5. Allow employees to telecommute when necessary.
6. Allow employees to have flex time hours so they can attend personal events.
7. Organize time for employees to engage with each other in non-working situations, through happy hours, retreats, team lunches, and other team building activities.
8. Promote work/life balance awareness throughout the work environment by displaying posters, emailing information, and posting it in common areas.
9. Arrange for work/life balance seminars and posting tips on company websites.

Goal Management: The company will encourage employees to make health and wellness goals while at work. We will:

1. Encourage employees to make trackable and achievable goals for health and wellness.
2. Encourage employees to get biometric testing done either by a doctor or onsite at the company's biometric test day.
3. Encourage managers to lead by example.
4. Reward employees who reach their goals.

ⁱ <http://www.entrepreneur.com/encyclopedia/term/82650.html>

ⁱⁱ Mulvihill, Michael. "The Definition and Core Practices of Wellness." *Journal of Employee Assistance*. (2003): 13-15.

ⁱⁱⁱ Isnar, Rita. "Taking Control of the CMS Managed Care Audit Process." *Managed Care Outlook*. Volume 24, Number 5 (2011): 5-10.

^{iv} Berry, Leonard L., Ann M. Mirabito, William B. Baun. "What's the Hard Return on Employee Wellness Program?." *Harvard Business Review* (2010): 104-112.

^v <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/DNPAleg/index.asp>

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