

WASHINGTON WELLNESS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY TOOLKIT

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Recommendations, resources, tips and evidence for increasing physical activity among employees at your Washington State worksite.

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FORWARD NOTES

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Lisa Higgins, candidate for the Master of Public Health Nutrition Program at the University of Washington, completed the research, writing and assembly of this toolkit. Washington Wellness is grateful for her exemplary work.

How to Use This Toolkit

This toolkit is intended to be used to support the Washington Wellness Worksite program. A Washington Wellness Worksite is a worksite that has met a set of criteria to establish a healthy work culture. The criteria are a group of standards that when performed together increase the likelihood for improved workforce health and productivity. Throughout the toolkit, specific areas that link to the Washington Wellness Worksite Criteria will be identified in a blue box with this symbol:



A “Quick Start” list of strategies comes on page 4 and serves as a menu of strategies. These strategies are divided into three change areas: Policy, Environmental and Individual. Clicking on one of these strategies will take you to supporting information about that specific strategy, including “Tips for Success,” “Helpful Resources,” and “Supportive Evidence.” Organizations may wish to review these strategies and consider which would be most appropriate fit.

“Tips for Success” consist of practical advice, and appear in a light gray box with this symbol:



“Helpful Resources” include links or examples, and appear in a gray box with this symbol:



And “Supportive Evidence” is from the evaluation information and relevant professional journals, and appears in dark gray boxes with this symbol:



After the strategies, included in the toolkit are background information, evidence, best practices and theories supporting physical activity in the worksite.

About the Washington Wellness Worksite Program

The Washington Wellness Worksite designation program was designed for Washington State's agencies and institutions to attain and sustain a healthy work culture. The Health Care Authority's Integrated Employee Health and Productivity division led the development of the Washington Wellness Worksite criteria from best-practice literature and field testing by state agencies participating in the Healthy Worksite Initiative demonstration project. The criteria have been shaped by a wide array of experts including wellness coordinators, agency senior leaders, academic - University of Washington and Department of Health staff; public and private organization health and productivity program staff and labor representatives.

To view or download a copy of the Washington Wellness Worksite Handbook or other related resources, visit www.washingtonwellness.gov. Additional resources for increasing physical activity in the worksite are also available from http://www.washingtonwellness.gov/resources_physical.shtml; visit the site regularly for updates and new materials.

For more information about this or other programs of the Integrated Employee Health and Productivity division, contact info@washingtonwellness.gov or call (360) 923-2730.

Important Reminders Before You Begin

Your agency can take steps to enhance the health of employees by helping them to move more. The following sections of this toolkit provide suggestions and guidelines for implementing individual and group activities, as well as promoting and supporting policy and environmental changes at your worksite. Here are some tips before you begin.



Tips for Success:

Respect boundaries. Some employees, for example, do not want to exercise at work and employers need to be mindful of these preferences. Your role isn't to become the fitness police.

One size doesn't fit all. In order to promote physical activity effectively, use a range of strategies which can appeal to people who are motivated to be physically active for different reasons and at different levels.

Consider "packaging" your strategies. Rather than picking a set of unrelated activities that are not connected, "package" your activities whenever possible so that they build off of each other. By providing the right mix of programs, you can get a multiplier effect that is greater than the effect of adding up individual activities. Packaging related strategies will lead to greater participation and long term success. For instance, having a policy that encourages physical activity on break time, coupled with providing maps or on-site trails to get staff out walking, coupled with a dress code policy that supports physical activity may lead to greater success than any of the three strategies alone.

QUICK START MENU

Policy Change Strategies to Support Physical Activity

1. [Review the organization's dress code to make sure it supports physical activity.](#)
2. [Promote discounted or subsidized memberships at local health clubs/fitness centers.](#)
3. [Develop a policy or organizational practice on flexible work schedules.](#)
4. [Incorporate physical activity into meetings through a healthy meeting policy.](#)
5. [Develop policies to provide breaks during working hours and encourage employees to be active during breaks.](#)
6. [Develop policies that enable employees to use paid time during the work day for physical activity.](#)

Environmental Changes to Support Physical Activity

1. [Secure management and supervisor support of efforts.](#)
2. [Install bike racks in safe, well-lit areas close to entrances.](#)
3. [Encourage stair use.](#)
4. [Provide changing rooms and/or showers and storage areas/lockers.](#)
5. [Provide physical activity messages and information to employees to increase awareness.](#)
6. [Allow on-site space to be used for physical activity.](#)
7. [Examine facilities planning.](#)

Activities Organizations Can Support to Increase Employee Physical Activity

1. [Implement incentive-based programs to encourage physical activity.](#)
Examples of existing programs to promote physical activity for employees
 - a. [Washington Health Foundation Health Trackers/Governor's Health Bowl](#)
 - b. [Start!](#)
 - c. [Active for Life](#)
 - d. [President's Challenge](#)
 - e. [America on the Move!](#)
 - f. [Physical Activity Counts](#)
 - g. [Move for Life](#)
2. [Organize employee walking or activity clubs.](#)
3. [Promote nearby walking paths/routes.](#)
4. [Host walk-and-talk meetings.](#)
5. [Provide on-site physical activity classes.](#)
6. [Connect employees with physical activity opportunities in the community.](#)
7. [Consider promoting and/or providing pedometers to employees.](#)
8. [Use computer prompts/pop-ups to encourage short stretch breaks.](#)
9. [Provide access to on-site gym or activity center.](#)

PART 1: POLICY CHANGES

People are physically active for many reasons, including chronic disease prevention or management, weight loss, stress management, reducing the costs and pollution associated with commuting, and for fun. However, too often the worksite makes it challenging for people to make the healthy choice the easy choice. Policies that provide opportunities to be physically active result in a healthier work environment overall. Policy changes, like environmental changes, have the ability to impact large groups of people and can have lasting impacts. Workplace policies related to physical activity influence workplace culture, which describes “how things are done around here”. Creating a work culture where wellness is encouraged will reinforce healthy behaviors. Policies can be formal, or in the form of a less formal guideline.



A Health and Productivity/Wellness Policy is essential to meet one of the Washington Wellness Worksite criteria under the category *Reshape the Internal Work Environment*.

Does that mean that policy change is easy? Hardly. Barriers include organization bureaucracy, “turf issues” from human resources, facilities, safety and labor groups, the resistance to adding “yet another policy” and fear from senior leaders of unintended consequences. Policies alone do not always lead to changed behavior, how often policies are reviewed, enforced and whether or not they become the culture of an organization determine the effectiveness of a physical activity policy. Policy change can take time, use political capital, and require patience. Not all of the policy changes listed will work in every organization; however, they are provocative reminders of the power of policies to impact behaviors.

Policy works most strongly as a means of clear communication with employees around expectation of appropriate use of time for physical activity.

Policy Change Strategies to Support Physical Activity

1. Review the organization’s dress code.

Does it allow employees to dress in a way that makes physical activity possible during the work day and/or during commute? The dress code is especially important to support other strategies such as a stair use campaign, walking meetings, walking/stretching breaks, nearby mapped-out trails, and on-site bike racks. Some agencies will have more flexibility than others regarding dress codes.

2. Promote discounted or subsidized memberships at local health clubs/fitness centers.

Offering partial or complete reimbursement for fitness facility memberships is an alternative to the costly endeavor of creating an on-site fitness facility. There are many ways in which to incentivize health club memberships. Offering reduced-cost or paid club memberships alone targets those in the preparatory and action stages of change but may not be enough to assure that employees (particularly those in the pre-contemplative and contemplative stages) will engage in *regular* physical activity. Combining membership benefits with other incentives, encouragement, and a supportive workplace culture can improve employee participation. Incentives for regular gym use can range from implementing flex- time schedules to paying a higher proportion of monthly membership costs for employees who go at least twice a week. You may want to consider reimbursing per visit rather than buying yearly memberships. This strategy increases an individual’s perceived and actual control over their physical activity behaviors.



Tips for Success:

Promote the Washington State Fitness Club Discount Program at employee orientations and/or in flyers in highly visible locations.



Helpful Resources:

Washington Wellness Fitness Club Discount Program website:

http://www.washingtonwellness.gov/resources_physical_clubs.shtml

CDC's Discount Fitness Club Network website:

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/hwi/toolkits/fitnessclub/index.htm>

3. Develop a policy or organizational practice on flexible work schedules (flex-time).

For example, allow employees to arrive and leave 1/2 hour later, or arrive 1/2 hour early and take an hour lunch (if lunch is usually 1/2 hour). While not as powerful as providing paid time during the workday for physical activity, flexible work schedules can help employees overcome one of the most common barriers to physical activity – lack of time. Schedule flexibility enables employees to fit physical activity into their work schedules (before, during or after work). This strategy can increase an individual's perceived and actual behavioral control (as defined in the Theory of Planned Behavior).



Tips for Success:

- Review existing policies and employee interest in working flexible schedules.
- Draft a flexible time policy.
- Define supervisory responsibilities in the policy for approving work hour flexibility for physical activity while maintaining staff coverage and workflow.
- Approve and enact policy.
- Promote existence of policy to managers and all employees.
- Decide whether flex-time will be offered solely for the purpose of fitting in physical activity. For instance, sample language could include "...provide extended lunch hours for employees who commit to lunch time exercise programs."



Helpful Resource:

The following is an example of a policy that has been established at CDC for CDC employees. It allows CDC employees to vary daily arrival/departure times within a flexible band of time and extend lunch periods up to an additional 1½ hours. This time can be used to exercise and to carpool.

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/hwi/policies/Alternative%20Work%20Schedules.pdf>

4. Incorporate physical activity into meetings through a healthy meeting policy.

- a. Encourage walk-and-talk meetings, which may be appropriate for meetings with 2-4 people and involve discussion and creative thinking rather than presentations, handouts, or note taking. Sample language: "*Employees are encouraged to participate in "walking" meetings for short check-ins with other staff and supervisors. Rather than sit in an office for a quick*

discussion, go for a walk in the hallway or on a short outside route to cover the same content, but in a nicer environment with the added benefit of a little physical activity. Supervisors will support this as a standard work practice.”

- b. Encourage brief physical activity breaks during meetings. A short walk can re-energize participants, allow for continued discussion or thought, and make the meeting more productive. Target audience includes adults of diverse racial/ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, who are predominantly middle-aged and older, overweight and/or sedentary.



Helpful Resources:

- The Washington State Department of Health’s Energize Your Meetings Guidelines offer physical activity suggestions for short meetings, multi-day trainings, and everything in-between. Download a copy here:
http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/NutritionPA/pdf_files/Energize-Your-Meetings.pdf
- Los Angeles Lift Off! 10-Minute Physical Activity Breaks intervention: 10 minute group physical activity breaks for employees. Activities include a series of basic exercises that can be easily performed by individuals of varied fitness levels at varying levels of intensity, with minimal risk of injury. Intentionally designed to be appropriate for unfit, sedentary, overweight adults in ordinary street clothing, and led by a member of the organization. Target audience includes adults of diverse racial/ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, who are predominantly middle-aged and older, overweight and/or sedentary.
<http://toniyancey.com/liftoff/>



Supportive Evidence:

Lara, Agustin; Yancey, Antronette K; Tapia-Conye, Roberto, et al. Pausa para tu Salud: Reduction of Weight and Waistlines by Integrating Exercise Breaks into Workplace Organizational Routine Prev Chronic Dis Volume: 5 Issue: 1 Pages: A12 Jan 2008; Access: <http://www.toniyancey.com/liftoff/documents/pm.pdf>

- This study describes implementation and evaluation of a one-year intervention, Pausa para tu Salud (Pause for Your Health), that integrated 10-minute group exercise breaks into the paid work day. (breaks were optional but strongly recommended) Sample included 335 Mexican Ministry of Health health and social services office workers in urban US communities. Intervention improved measures of BMI and waist circumference.

5. Develop policies to provide breaks during working hours and encourage employees to be active during breaks.

Encouraging activity breaks, also known as stretch breaks, micro breaks or mini breaks, can help reduce tension caused when muscles remain static or fixed in one position for too long. Providing short breaks during which physical activity is encouraged can help employees accumulate daily physical activity, as well as impact productivity by improving their ability to concentrate. Remember that the 30 minutes of daily moderate physical activity recommended by the surgeon general does not need to be done all at once. 10-minute segments contribute to the daily total.



Tip for Success:

Groups likely to benefit most from this approach are the more sedentary and overweight population subgroups, as it is not a competitive, leisure-time, individual, or sports-oriented physical activity promotion effort. See strategy 4 above for an existing example.

6. **Develop policies that enable employees to use paid time during the work day for physical activity.** Allowing employees to use paid time to be physically active sends a strong message of support and encouragement. It also removes a major barrier – lack of time – to physical activity, thus increasing perceived and actual behavioral control. Policies may address the following strategies:

Develop a policy that allows employees to use part of their regular workday (paid time, other than breaks or lunch) to be physically active.

Sample language: “Beginning January 1, 2009 all employees are required to receive at least 30 minutes, but not more than an hour, of paid break time each day to participate in physical activity. This time is designated for the purpose of participating in physical activity only. Employees who do not wish to participate can decline the extra break time.”



Helpful resource:

Sample policy by the Utah Department of Health:

http://health.utah.gov/hearhighway/pdfs/Excercise_Release_Policy_worksites.pdf

Designated ‘walk or work’ time. The organization designates certain times during the paid workday that all employees can use for physical activity. This approach has the added advantage of co-worker support: everyone is getting up and taking a walk, so employees are more likely to “join the crowd”.

Sample language: “All employees have the option to ‘walk or work’ during the 30 minutes from 8:30 to 9:00 am or from 2:30 to 3:00pm. Employees who choose to use those times for physical activity will be paid for that time. Employees who choose to continue to work also will be paid for that time. Other uses of the time, e.g., smoking breaks or coffee breaks, will not be paid.”

PTO (paid time off) for physical activity. In the same way that some organizations provide employees with a certain number of PTO hours they can use for volunteer work or preventive health care, your organization may want to provide employees with a certain number of Physical Activity PTO hours to use each month. Employees need to obtain supervisor approval for the use of those hours, just as they would seek approval to use other PTO time.

Employer matching. This approach is similar to employer matching of employees’ charitable contributions. Employees are provided with 30 minutes of paid time for physical activity – up to paid 2 hours per week -- for every 30 minutes of activity the employee puts in on his/her personal time. Some organizations ask employees to submit a physical activity plan to HR in order to “qualify” for the matching time.

PART 2: ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

Many changes can be made in the workplace to create an environment and culture that embraces and encourages being active. Supportive work environments can have a significant impact on health since most adults spend the majority of their daytime hours at work. Behaviors such as physical activity are influenced by environmental cues such as the location of an elevator. Unlike trying to impact change at an individual level, environmental changes have the potential to impact large groups of people, giving them a wider reach. A positive environment can help employees to turn healthy choices into healthy habits. Environmental change can have lasting impacts.



Several of the strategies listed in this section can help your organization meet the Washington Wellness Worksite criteria under the category *Reshape the Internal Work Environment*.

Environmental Changes to Support Physical Activity

1. **Secure leadership support at all levels of your organization.**

Having support demonstrates to employees the commitment of management towards health and wellness, which can boost employee morale by blurring the line between “you” and “them.” Management support may determine whether the strategies will ultimately succeed. Ask management to help create a culture that promotes healthy eating and regular physical activity by setting an example, participating in worksite health promotion activities, and encouraging and recognizing employees for their efforts. If management support and participation can influence norms in the workplace, normative beliefs may change, and behavioral change may be more likely.

2. **Install bike racks in safe, well-lit areas close to entrances.**

This encourages bicycle commuting to work. Studies show that people who exercise in the morning are more alert when they get to work. Bike parking is inexpensive to provide compared to automobile parking.



Tips for Success:

- When promoting active commuting, consider the dress code and changing/shower facilities.
- Look for the inverted-U rack. This type of rack offers the best of short-term cycle parking and is widely regarded as the recommended standard.
- Provide employees information regarding transit with a bike, increasing perceived control. <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/bike/travel.htm>
- Employee and employer mapping out of safe routes to work can help others to explore or realize options.
- May is National Bike Month and the [League of American Cyclists](#) are promote a week in May as National Bike to Work Week. See if the city or county that your worksite is located in offers local activities, and if they do, consider connecting with their promotion efforts.

3. Encourage stair use

Taking the stairs regularly is a promising activity for increasing physical activity. Deciding between using the stairs and using an elevator or escalator is a lifestyle choice that is made daily.



Tips for Success:

- Make the stairwell accessible and inviting (lighting, carpet/non-slip, music, art, paint, air quality, safe with railings)
- Use motivational signs and point-of-decision prompts at the elevator and stairwell entrances. Posting motivational signs at points-of-decision around a building is important in encouraging people to use the stairs. However, messages and artwork that are motivating to one audience may be a turn off to another, which is why it is important to test them with members of your audience first. Whether the messages are inspirational, factual, health-related, or humorous, find out what motivates your audience and tailor your messages and artwork accordingly. Consider varying the messages from time to time to keep people reading and interested.
- Get creative in making stair use more appealing and fun. See the piano stairs video clip in how stairs were made fun in Stockholm: www.TheFunTheory.com
*See CDC StairWELL to health website:
<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/hwi/toolkits/stairwell/index.htm>
*See <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Documents/CPNS-StairwellsTool.pdf>
- Consider incorporating a stairwell use competition in order to encourage initial stair use.
*See <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Documents/CPNS-StairwellCompetitionForm.pdf>
*See sections 2.9-2.40 of BC Ministry Stairwell to health campaign:
<http://www.actnowbc.ca/media/2Activities.pdf>
- Consider doing a survey before posting the signs to find out how often people use the stairs. This will make evaluation easier.



Supportive Evidence:

- Evaluation of BC Ministry stair use intervention: The intervention included stairwell beautification, stairwell music, point-of choice posters, and stair-climbing challenges/competitions. Evaluation conclusion: Physical changes in the stairwell combined with activities that prompt employees to use the stairs appear to be an effective component of an overall health and wellness strategy for the workplace. Other positive outcomes included enjoyment, interaction/bonding with co-workers, and goal-setting. (¾ of the employee population were female) Link to Evaluation: <http://www.actnowbc.ca/media/StairwaytoHealthEvaluationReport.pdf>
- N.A. Kerr, M.M. Yore, S.A. Ham and W.H. Dietz. Increasing stair use in a worksite through environmental changes, *Am J Health Promot* **18** (4) (2004), pp. 312–315. This study assessed the impact on stair use of four sequential environmental interventions: (1) installing new carpet and painting the walls, (2) adding framed art-work on stair landings, (3) displaying motivational signs throughout the building, and (4) adding a stereo system and playing various types of music in the stairwell. Setting was a CDC building in Atlanta. Stair use measured by sensors installed at stairwell entries. Conclusions: physical improvements to stairwell, signage to encourage stair use, and music increased stair use.

- [Dolan MS](#), [Weiss LA](#), [Lewis RA](#), [Pietrobelli A](#), [Heo M](#), [Faith MS](#). 'Take the stairs instead of the escalator': effect of environmental prompts on community stair use and implications for a national 'Small Steps' campaign. [Obes Rev](#). 2006 Feb;7(1):25-32. Reviewed eight studies in order to evaluate the effects of motivational signs prompting stair use over escalator use on pedestrians' stair usage in public commuter settings. Results suggest that point-of-decision motivational signs may help increase stair use, although the effect may be small. The effects were found to be twice as great in women as men.
- [Eves FF](#), [Webb OJ](#), [Mutrie N](#). A workplace intervention to promote stair climbing: greater effects in the overweight. [Obesity \(Silver Spring\)](#). 2006 Dec;14(12):2210-6. This study conducted a formal comparison of the effects of the intervention on stair ascent and descent, which other studies may not capture. Although stair descent was more common than stair ascent, the intervention had similar effects for both directions of travel. **A significant effect of the intervention on stair climbing was greater in those coded as overweight than in individuals coded as normal weight.** This finding not only suggests that stair use interventions effectively target overweight populations, but also has implications for other study findings: it is possible that other studies may not capture a large intervention effect if the study population is not stratified by weight.

4. Provide changing rooms and/or showers and storage areas/lockers.

This encourages active commuting to work (biking, walking with or without bus)



Tip for Success:

This and other environmental strategies target those in the preparatory, action, and maintenance stages of change. Those in the pre-contemplative or contemplative stages may need additional motivation/incentive to take on active commuting options such as biking. But don't leave them out -- these strategies may increase perceived behavioral control (as described in the Theory of Planned Behavior) and certainly increase *actual* behavioral control.

5. Provide physical activity messages and information to employees to increase awareness.

While providing messages and information alone is generally ineffective in increasing physical activity, it might be an important addition to other strategies, especially if employees are in the pre-contemplative and contemplative stages of change. Consider posting and/or distributing informational flyers and pamphlets.



Tips for Success:

- Flyers/pamphlets that describe the range of benefits of physical activity: increase awareness, influence behavioral beliefs (from Theory of Planned Behavior).
- Flyers/pamphlets that contain physical activity tips: increase knowledge, increase perceived behavioral control (from Theory of Planned Behavior). 32 sample flyers and handouts can be seen at North Carolina's eat-smart, move-more website: http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/Resources/wwtoolkit/1_docs/move_more/MM_Appl%20MM%20Handouts.pdf
- Send weekly or monthly physical activity tips through email to employees.

6. Allow on-site space to be used for physical activity.

Facilities may be used for physical activity, individual or group, provided that release forms are signed. Employees can lead group classes, possibly on their work time, as in King County. Include guidance in your organization's wellness policy on use of space and instructors for fitness classes. Remember to research potential liability issues; Contact the employer's legal department regarding participant waivers, necessary insurance, and any other liability concerns. On-site group classes are discussed in the Activity section.

7. Facilities Planning

For those organizations that plan to move to new locations/buildings, wellness as it relates to the physical environment (both inside and outside of the building) should be considered. Factors include: neighborhood walkability, public transit access, on-site facilities such as showers, dedicated space for physical activity, lockers, changing rooms, bike racks, etc.

PART 3: INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL CHANGES

Note: When developing an employee-level activity for your worksite, particularly one that involves a challenge or competition, it is important to recognize that physical activity is *not* limited to rigorous activities and sports. Some employee populations may respond better to activities that recognize all forms of physical activity such as walking, operating a manual wheelchair, or gardening/mowing the lawn, housework or washing the car. Be careful not to alienate employees who do not gravitate to traditional sports or are uncomfortable with competition.



Several of the strategies listed in this part function as ways to meet the Washington Wellness Worksite criteria checklist components under the categories, *Test Effective Wellness Activities* and *Leverage Community Linkages*, in conjunction with the other criteria in those categories.

Activities Organizations Can Support to Increase Employee Physical Activity

1. Implement incentive-based programs to encourage physical activity.

An incentive is an anticipated positive or desirable reward designed to influence the performance of an individual or group. Health behavior is notoriously difficult to change. A multitude of factors affect our behavioral choices. Incentives for health behavior change are intended to act as additional inducements to help people initiate and maintain selected health-related behaviors. Unless individuals in your population can identify real incentives or reasons to change their current health behaviors, they are not likely to change.

Incentives offer a form of reinforcement that motivates people to begin or continue a behavior such as physical activity. Thus incentives affect behavioral beliefs (from the theory of planned behavior) by providing an outcome that has external value. However, the use of incentives for health behavior change is somewhat controversial. Drawbacks may include their tendency to ignore underlying behavioral factors, reinforce only short-term change and potentially undermine internal motivation. Although providing incentives (extrinsic rewards) may help people adopt physical activity behaviors, such external reinforcement may not be reliable for sustained long-term change. Nonetheless, research shows that incentive-based programs help employees to maintain positive change. *Smaller* external incentives are more likely to help individuals internalize their new behaviors and maintain them over the long term without ongoing external rewards.

Program planners should anticipate that employees with all levels of physical fitness may be participating and that prizes may be offered for different levels of effort. The organizational culture and policies may also dictate which incentives may be appropriately used.

Incentives can include:

- Achievement awards. Verbal praise and a pat on the back are motivational to some, but a token of recognition of achievement may offer more. A colorful certificate to congratulate an employee for achieving a health-related goal is one example.
- Public recognition. Most people love to see their names in print. Publish the names of wellness program participants in your employee newsletter. This will honor the employees who have attempted to make positive lifestyle changes and can motivate others to do the same.
- Merchandise. Award a t-shirt, canvas bag, cap, etc. to participants who sign up and/or complete a program. Your company logo may be imprinted on these items as well.
- Monetary rewards. Offer an employee \$10 for completing a wellness program.

- Food. Offer beverages and healthy snacks to employees who participate in on-site wellness programs. Use gift certificates to a local restaurant as door prizes.
- Entertainment. Hold a drawing for movie tickets, sporting events tickets, or fitness store gift certificates for participants of wellness programs.
- Time off. Allow employees to take an extended lunch break.
- Drawings for fitness-related prizes.
- Lunch with the head of the organization.
- Special parking spot (not the closest one, but one that allows for special recognition)



Tips for Success:

- Figure out what incentives the agency can provide.
- Offer *participation* incentives.
- Make sure every participant who achieves a goal receives some recognition.
- Avoid rewards for biometric changes (i.e., pounds lost, cholesterol improvements).
- Avoid offering incentives for the “best” or the “most.” This tends to discourage participation by those who are likely to get the most benefit from joining.
- Ask workers what incentives they value most.
- Sample question for employees in order to choose effective incentives:
Which incentives would help motivate you to become healthier? Mark all that apply.
 - Money
 - Paid leave (Not available for spouses and part-time employees)
 - Competition
 - Swimming pool pass or Recreation Center pass
 - T-shirts/hats
 - Recognition
 - Drawings for prizes (i.e., gift cards, electronics, massages, DVDs, CDs, etc.)
 - Other, please specify
- There are several existing promotions that can be conducted at a very low cost to encourage employees to set goals for physical activity. Most campaigns last about 6 – 8 weeks, and have participants set personal physical activity goals, e.g., be active for 30 minutes a day, increase steps walked per day by 2,000. The promotions are designed to get people to start and maintain a physical activity habits.
 - Steps to implementing an existing promotion:
 - Select a program to promote (e.g., Governor’s Health Bowl) and obtain materials
 - Select start date and length of program. Spring is a good time to hold a physical activity promotion.
 - Decide on awards/incentives (if any) for participation (e.g., pedometers, reflective vests)
 - Begin promoting program through several avenues, e.g., e-mail, bulletin boards, paycheck stuffers
 - Sign employees up for the program.
 - Run the program. Send reminders and motivational messages about the program during the course of the program.



Helpful Resources:

Below are examples of existing programs to promote physical activity for employees

- a. **Washington Health Foundation Health Trackers/Governor's Health Bowl**
Throughout the year, employees can form teams and can participate in challenges that track "health miles," including physical activity, using online trackers. The ability of organizations to challenge each other, or groups within organizations to do so, is possible using the tracking tools. The Governor's Health Bowl is an annual competition that offers an opportunity for individuals and organizations involved in Washington's healthiest state in the nation campaign to build challenges around fitness and health knowledge. <http://www.whf.org/events/2009-governors-health-bowl>
The Governor's Health bowl is a Washington Wellness Promoted Program. For helpful information, see:
http://www.washingtonwellness.gov/resources_physical_qhb.shtml
- b. **Start!** is a program of the American Heart Association. With tools for employees and coordinators, the program encourages organizations to set up walking routes in the workplace, encourage employees to use them, and celebrate and reward those employees who go from a sedentary lifestyle to a more active one. Trackers, posters, signage and links to other American Heart Association programs are included in the program. <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3053111>
- c. **Active for Life** is an American Cancer Society employee wellness program. The 10-week program encourages employees to be more active on a regular basis by setting individual goals and forming teams for motivation and support. Throughout the ten weeks activities and workshops, ranging from group walks to workshops on personal safety and health, help inform and motivate participants.
http://www.cancer.org/docroot/PED/content/PED_1_5X_Active_For_Life.asp
- d. **President's Challenge** is an online system where one logs in to enter activities over the past 2 weeks. Any activity that uses a large muscle counts (walking, gardening, skiing, playing shuffleboard). Participants can log minutes of activity or steps taken as indicated by a pedometer. Employees can sign up as individuals, or, to maximize social support, as groups. <http://www.presidentschallenge.org/>
 - The Beginner Challenge is for people not active 30 min/day. This challenge lasts 8 weeks and the goal is to achieve at least 30 minutes of physical activity per day at least 5 days/week for 6 weeks. Upon meeting this goal, participants receive an award. Once an award is received, one can continue with this program and earn more awards or move to the President Champions challenge...
 - The President Champion challenge is for people who want to keep raising their physical activity level. There are special options for performance athletes or those training at more advanced levels. One first aims for bronze (which can take 6 weeks if intensely active each day), then silver, then gold. The less intense the physical activity, the longer it will take.
 - Advantages of this program are that it is appropriate for people at any fitness level and does not involve competition between participants. Rather, each individual challenges themselves and track their own progress.

- e. **America on the Move!** is a nationwide initiative to prevent obesity and improve health by increasing lifestyle physical activity and decreasing 100 calories per day. America on the Move! has programs to increase physical activity in schools, worksites, and communities. The programs use pedometers to help participants monitor and increase physical activity. The goal is to increase walking by 2,000 steps a day, the equivalent to walking about one mile. <http://aom3.americaonthemove.org/>
- f. **Physical Activity Counts (PAC)** is a self-run program based on personal goal setting. It is designed to help participants increase their level of physical activity according to their own interests and lifestyles. Score sheets are used for recording daily physical activity. Co-workers can encourage each other or groups can hold friendly competitions for prizes or special recognition. The basic program is inexpensive and flexible and can be modified to fit a particular worksite. Note: this does NOT necessarily need to be incentive based. <http://www.tompkins-co.org/wellness/worksite/workwell/paprogram.html>
- g. **Move for Life** is an 8- to 10-week program designed to help employees of all physical abilities, regardless of age, current fitness level or activity level. One of the keys of *Move for Life!* is its flexibility. It can be made longer or shorter and scheduled to fit the company's schedule. *Move for Life!* recognizes that all employees are not at the same level of fitness, nor do they have the same interest in being active. *Move for Life!* allows participants to set their own personal goals, ranging from moderate activities, like walking or doing yard work, to more intense ones, like running and swimming. Then they record their daily activities and begin tracking their progress. <http://www.tompkins-co.org/wellness/worksite/workwell/move4life.html>

2. Organize employee walking or activity clubs.

Organize group activities that occur before or after work, during lunches or morning/afternoon breaks. People are more motivated to exercise regularly if there is someone or a group to walk with. Positive peer pressure and social support keeps people coming back. This type of activity has clear connections with the social support theory and theory of planned behavior. Activity clubs help foster camaraderie, improve physical fitness, reduce stress, and build self-esteem. The Task Force on Community Preventive Services strongly recommends physical activity activities that involve social support. The rationale is that social networks will provide supportive relationships for behavior change.

Examples of activity clubs:

- Basketball
- Bicycling
- Hall walking/Walking Wednesdays
- Softball
- Running
- Volleyball
- Kayaking



Tips for Success:

- These clubs can be formally or informally organized, depending on the company's resources. They can be initiated or coordinated by either interested employees, wellness committees, or through on-site fitness center or wellness staff.
- Map out safe walking or biking routes of appropriate distance for use, if applicable.
- Promote the activity clubs with flyers, announcements, and emails.



Helpful resource:

California Department of Public Health guide to creating worksite walking clubs:
<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Documents/CPNS-WalkingClubTool.pdf>



Supportive Evidence:

In San Bernardino County, 1,600 county employees belong to a break-time walking club. The program is incentive based, with rewards at various mileage levels. Employees are encouraged to walk 500 miles and the incentive for finishing the program is a sweatshirt. Walkers are encouraged to walk every day and to use one full break period per day for their walking. Every worksite location determines the walking course, and each full break walked is considered a mile. Not only does this simplify bookkeeping, but it also encourages each walker to set a pace that is realistic for his or her level of fitness. A coordinator in the Wellness Department spends one to two hours a week arranging for the distribution of incentives, assisted by 100 site coordinators who spend only a few minutes a week reporting. The full reward package costs \$48 per walker who reaches 500 miles, a cost borne by each walker's individual department. The casual nature of the program has encouraged many nonmembers to go along for the walk, increasing the program's reach. Walkers come from all job classification levels, including hourly and salaried employees. A 1999 survey of club members indicated that 83 percent of the participants reported a reduction in stress, 46 percent reported weight loss, and 64 percent reported increased energy levels.

3. Promote nearby walking paths/routes

There are several ways to promote walking and active transport routes to, from and around your worksite. One is to have employers and employees map their own biking or walking routes to and from work. By doing so and sharing this information with coworkers, employees may perceive active commuting as more doable and as a social norm. This has clear application to the theory of planned behavior by increasing perceived control. This mainly targets those in the preparatory, action, and maintenance stage of change from the Transtheoretical Model.

Rather than relying on employees to do this, you may choose to use existing tools to map and promote walking paths near the worksite. These can include paths for brief walking breaks, walking meetings, for going to lunch, etc. Print maps, include distances, and possible range of time it would take to walk route. Maps can be pocket sized and distributed to employees or large and posted on visible bulletins.



Helpful resources:

- <http://www.mapmyrun.com/>
- http://startwalkingnow.org/start_walking_paths.jsp
- On mapping web sites, such as Google maps, walking and public transport routes can be selected in many areas. An example is included on the next page.

Web Images Videos Maps News Shopping Mail more ▼ saravee.sarlikar@hca.wa.gov | My Profile | Web History | My Account | Help |

Google maps 676 Woodland Square Loop SE, Lacey, WA 98503 Search Maps Show search options

The route has been modified. [Undo](#)

Get Directions My Maps

676 Woodland Square Loop SE, Lacey, WA 98503
 Pacific Ave SE and Franz St SE Lacey, WA
 676 Woodland Square Loop SE, Lacey, WA 98503
 Add Destination · Show options
 Walking Get Directions

Also available: [By car](#)

Walking directions are in beta.
 Use caution – This route may be missing sidewalks or pedestrian paths.

Walking directions to 676 Woodland Square Loop SE, Lacey, WA 98503
 2.0 mi – about 39 mins
 Via 6th Ave SE, Woodland Square Loop SE - [remove all](#)

- Head east on Woodland Square Loop SE 39 ft
- Turn left to stay on Woodland Square Loop SE 259 ft
- Turn right at 6th Ave SE 0.5 mi
- Turn right at Franz St SE 0.5 mi

1.0 mi – about 19 mins

- Head west on Pacific Ave SE toward Ruddell Rd SE 0.4 mi
- Turn right at College St SE 0.2 mi
- Turn left at Woodland Square Loop SE 0.4 mi

Destination will be on the right

676 Woodland Square Loop SE, Lac...

4. Host walk-and-talk meetings.

Encourage employees to participate in “walking” meetings for short check-ins with other staff and supervisors, rather than sit in an office for a quick discussion. This can be done inside or outside of the building. These small bouts of physical activity accumulate toward the 30 minute daily goal.



Tips for Success:

- Walking meetings are best for meetings with 2-4 people that involve discussion and creative thinking rather than presentations, handouts, or note taking.
- The walking component of the meeting should be agreed upon by all meeting attendees.
- Make sure that the walking route is fully accessible to all colleagues, including those in a wheelchair.
- The best way to encourage walking meetings is modeling, especially by senior management. This may help spread the practice such that it becomes a norm in the worksite. (can affect normative beliefs from the theory of planned behavior)
- This strategy will be less effective if the dress code does not support it.

5. Provide on-site physical activity classes such as yoga, Tai Chi, aerobics, dance, etc.

This activity helps employees to overcome a common barrier to physical activity, inconvenience, and may also help with the time barrier. Classes can be during paid time or unpaid time (before/after work, on lunch, on non-paid breaks, etc). Offerings can be as simple as opening up a conference room during lunch and letting employees use the TV/VCR to run a workout tape. Or an

employee may conduct the class and may use paid work time to do so. Alternatively, an outside instructor may be brought in – including guidance for use of outside instructors and physical space in your organization’s wellness policy can be of great assistance in accomplishing this strategy.



Tips for Success:

- Assess employees' interest in physical activity classes, type, time and duration.
- Research potential liability issues. Contact the employer’s legal department regarding participant waivers, necessary insurance, and any other liability concerns.
- Decide on time, place and types of activities, based on employee interests.
- Establish schedule of activities.
- Promote availability of activities.
- Monitor use and adjust schedule or activities as necessary.

6. Connect employees with physical activity opportunities in the community.

Here are some ways to connect employees with these resources:

- Distribute information about opportunities to join athletic groups in the community.
- Form and/or sponsor a company recreational athletic team. Local city and county organizations run leagues for a variety of activities such as softball, bowling, tennis, volleyball, etc.
- Conduct onsite wellness fairs that include fitness demonstrations and promote fitness activities and resources in the community.
- Encourage participation in community walks and runs (e.g., American Heart Association, American Cancer Society, fun runs). Many cities have walks and runs to raise money for a variety of causes. A volunteer from the worksite can be appointed to organize teams for events.



Tips for Success:

- Compile a list of local walks and runs (local runners' clubs are a good source).
- Publicize the walks/runs.
- Organize teams from the worksite to participate.
- Offer training opportunities to prepare for the event for those who are new to the activity.

7. Consider promoting and/or providing pedometers to employees.

Pedometers are an inexpensive, simple way of fostering physical activity. They provide immediate and objective feedback for the number of steps taken in a day. Used in combination with record keeping (e.g., calendars or diaries of daily progress), pedometers may be used in an effective way to increase daily physical activity. Pedometers are widely available from retailer and online sources and suppliers may offer a bulk discount.



Helpful resources:

- Sample pedometer walking program: <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/forms/DPH/dph40075.pdf>
- The 10,000 Steps Program, sponsored by Shape Up America! Using a pedometer, it’s a relatively simple program that can be done by one or many. Get a program kit from their [web site](#). For more information, see sections 2.3-2.16 of the following: <http://www.actnowbc.ca/media/2Activities.pdf>



Supportive Evidence:

British Columbia Ministry of Health has evaluated pedometer use, specifically with the 10,000 steps challenge. Participating employees reported that pedometer use helped them to increase or maintain physical activity but failed to demonstrate a statistically significant increase in self-reported physical activity. However, most of the employees who participated in the *evaluation* were already meeting physical activity recommendations prior to the activity. It is noteworthy that other positive outcomes of the activity included getting out with friends, creating camaraderie between co-workers and a positive work environment, meeting new people, and reaching family and kids as well. Negative findings include the increased competition between coworkers. Link:

<http://www.actnowbc.ca/media/StairwaytoHealthEvaluationReport.pdf>

Analysis of employees using 10,000 Steps Pedometer Program:

<http://spectrum.diabetesjournals.org/content/19/4/197.full>

- Participants were employees of HealthPartners, a managed care organization based in Minneapolis, Minnesota.
- The 10,000 Steps program was effective in promoting a moderate increase in short-term physical activity. (program lasts 8 weeks) Long-term effects not measured.

8. Use computer prompts/pop-ups that encourage short stretch breaks.

For office workers, consider installing computer programs that once every couple of hours send a stretch reminder, e.g., it's time to get up and move, or gives specific stretches for the neck, back, etc. Flexibility and balance are an important part of physical activity, especially for an aging population. Frequent quick stretching breaks can be particularly beneficial to sedentary office employees.

9. Provide access to on-site gym or activity center.

This strategy may be most effective in settings where the resources are considered an integral part of the setting, such as education or corrections. When possible, consider extending access to the facility to employee family members in order to maximize reach.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Rationale: Why Promote Physical Activity in the Workplace?

“Research has demonstrated that virtually all individuals will benefit from regular physical activity”

-United States Department of Health and Human Services

Lack of physical activity is a major public health problem. There has been a noticeable transition in work-related physical activity demands (moving increasingly from physical labor to sedentary occupations) (1). Sedentary behavior (less than 30 minutes of physical activity per day) has been identified as one of the leading preventable causes of death, and an inverse linear relationship exists between volume (duration x intensity) of physical activity and all-cause mortality (2). Participation in regular physical activity decreases the risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes mellitus, osteoporosis, depression, obesity, breast cancer, colon cancer, lower back pain, and falls in older adults (2,3). (36% of Washington adults are considered overweight and another 26% are considered obese, according to 2007 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System data (4).) Even moderate physical activity can reduce the risk of developing and/or dying from heart disease, diabetes, colon cancer, and high blood pressure (3). Not only do physically active people outlive people who are inactive, but regular physical activity enhances the quality of life in people of all ages (5). For people who are inactive, even small increases in physical activity are associated with measurable health benefits. Those who currently achieve moderate amounts of physical activity on a regular basis can obtain further benefits by increasing the duration, intensity, or frequency of activity (CDC).

According to the Public Health Agency of Canada’s Business Case for Active Living at Work, the benefits for employees include:

- Improved productivity and morale
- Improved job satisfaction and teamwork
- Reduced stress and back injuries
- For employers and their organizations, the benefits include:
 - Reduced absenteeism and turnover
 - Reduced stress and back injuries
 - Reduced workplace injuries
 - Reduced worker’s compensation costs
 - Reduced claims against group benefit plans
 - Improved productivity

A slide-show presentation on the business case for physical activity at work can be found at the Public Health Agency of Canada’s web site.(6)

Physical activity need not be strenuous to achieve these benefits. WHO defines physical activity as “any force exerted by skeletal muscles that results in energy expenditure above resting level... including walking or cycling for transport, dance, traditional games and pastimes, gardening and housework, as well as sport or deliberate exercise.” Thus, deliberate exercise such as sport is only one type of physical activity; incidental exercise, such as walking to a co-worker’s work station or using the stairs, is also an important form of physical activity.

Given the numerous health benefits of physical activity participation, various public health guidelines have been published on the recommended volume and intensity of physical activity for healthy adults. Healthy People 2010, by the US Department of Health and Human Services, is a set of health objectives for the Nation to achieve over the first decade of the 21st century. Two major physical activity and fitness objectives from Healthy People 2010 are to:

1. Reduce the proportion of adults who engage in no leisure-time physical activity.

2. Increase the proportion of adults that meet current Federal physical activity guidelines for aerobic physical activity and for muscle strength training:
 - a) Increase the proportion of adults who engage in aerobic physical activity of at least moderate intensity for at least 150 minutes/week or 75 minutes/week of vigorous intensity or an equivalent combination.
 - b) Increase the proportion of adults who engage in aerobic physical activity of at least moderate intensity for more than 300 minutes/week or more than 150 minutes/week of vigorous intensity or an equivalent combination.
 - c) Increase the proportion of adults who perform muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days of the week.
 - d) Increase the proportion of adults who meet the objectives for aerobic physical activity and for muscle strengthening.

The Washington Adult Health Survey (WAHS) in 2007 reported that 48% of Washington adults age 25+ met the following recommendations (similar to those above) for physical activity:

- at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on 5 or more days a week, or...
- at least 20 minutes of vigorous activity on 3 or more days a week, or...
- work involves mostly walking or heavy labor

Since employees spend many of their waking hours at work, the worksite is an ideal place to change behaviors. Worksite physical activity and fitness programs provide a mechanism for reaching large numbers of adults, and have at least short-term effectiveness in increasing the physical activity and fitness of program participants (7). The benefits of worksite physical activity promotion extend beyond personal benefits to the individual; evidence that worksite programs are cost-effective is growing (7).

References

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Theories to Consider When Planning to Increase Physical Activity at the Worksite

Learning theories emphasize that learning a new, complex pattern of behavior, like changing from a sedentary to an active lifestyle, normally requires modifying many of the small behaviors that compose an overall complex behavior. What follows is a brief description of three learning theories that apply well to physical activity activities. You may find it useful to consider one or more of these theories when designing your physical activity intervention.

Theory of Planned Behavior

The theory of planned behavior states that individual behavior is primarily determined by a person's intention to perform that behavior. This intention is determined by three major factors: the person's attitude toward the behavior (behavioral beliefs), the influence of the person's social environment or subjective norm (normative beliefs), and the person's perceived control over the opportunities, resources, and skills necessary to perform a behavior (perceived control).

- Behavioral beliefs (attitude toward the behavior): beliefs about the outcomes of the behavior and the value of these outcomes.
- A strategy that acts on behavioral beliefs is one that affects the individual's belief about the outcomes of physical activity: winning money, improving health, having more energy, looking better, etc.
- Normative beliefs (subjective norm): beliefs about what other people think the person should do, as well as the person's motivation to comply with the opinions of others
- Any activity or strategy that changes the culture or norm in the workplace has potential to change behavior. "Culture has to do with norms, and norms are really how things get done around here." - Dr. Rick Bellingham, CEO and Founder of iobility
- Control Beliefs (perceived behavioral control): The concept of perceived behavioral control is similar to the concept of self-efficacy -- person's perception of his or her ability to perform the behavior.

A strategy can impact control beliefs by making physical activity opportunities more accessible or at least increasing one's *perception* of physical activity accessibility.

An important adjunct to this theory is the concept of *actual* behavioral control (as opposed to perceived); actual behavioral control affects how intention translates into behavior. Physical activity activities directed at behavioral, normative, or control beliefs may succeed in producing corresponding changes in attitudes, subjective norms, and perceptions of behavioral control — and these changes may further influence intentions to be more physically active. The activity will still be ineffective, however, unless individuals are in fact capable of carrying out their newly formed intentions to be physically active. It is therefore incumbent on employers to ensure that there is a strong link from intentions to behavior. When this relation is weak, steps must be taken to strengthen it. This is the rationale for strategies to address the workplace environment and policies such that increased physical activity *can* occur.

Stages of Change Theory (Transtheoretical Model)

In this model, behavior change has been conceptualized as a five-stage process or continuum related to a person's readiness to change: precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance. People are thought to progress through these stages at varying rates, often moving back and forth along the continuum a number of times before attaining the goal of maintenance. According to this theory, tailoring activities to match a person's readiness or stage of change is essential. For example, for people who are not yet contemplating becoming more active, providing information on the

benefits of physical activity may be more effective in moving them to the next stage (contemplative) than installing bike racks, which may better target those in the action or maintenance stages.

Five stages in changing behaviors:

1. Pre-contemplation: people in this stage are not thinking about increasing their physical activity in the near future.
2. Contemplation: people in this stage are beginning to seriously think about increasing physical activity in the near future (next 6 months)
3. Preparation: At this stage most people have tried to increase physical activity at least once in the past year, and they are thinking about trying again within the next month.
4. Action: Real steps are being actively taken to increase physical activity. This is the stage where a slip is most likely to occur.
5. Maintenance: This stage applies to people who are physically active and have been for some time (over six months). They now must maintain their active behavior.

Stage of change can be assessed using a simple questionnaire. See #1 in the following link:

http://dhs.wi.gov/health/physicalactivity/pdf_files/Worksite%20toolkit/AppendixCsurvey.pdf

Support for applying the transtheoretical model to physical activity:

Applying the Transtheoretical Model to Exercise: A Systematic and Comprehensive Review of the Literature: *Three questions guided a literature review of the transtheoretical model (TTM) as applied to exercise to address the evidence for stage-matched interventions, the description of priority populations, and the identification of valid TTM measurement tools. One-hundred and-fifty studies were reviewed. Results indicate preliminary support for the use of stage-matched exercise interventions. Most studies have focused on White, middle-class, female populations, limiting the generalizability of their findings. Valid and reliable measures exist for stage of change, decisional balance, processes of change, self-efficacy, and temptations to not exercise; however, more research is needed to refine these measures. Evidence for the construct validity of the TTM as applied to exercise is mixed. **When designing and implementing TTM-based exercise interventions, practitioners and policy makers are encouraged to clearly define the term exercise, choose a valid and reliable staging tool, and employ all TTM constructs and not just stage membership.***

Social Support Theory

This theory assumes that social support and interaction have a great impact on health behavior. Evidence does suggest that social support for a behavior is a key influence on the behavior. Greater social interaction may help prevent 'obesigenic' behaviors, not limited to physical activity; perhaps as increasing technology isolates people, more satisfying relationships substitute for overeating behavior. An advantage of incorporating social support into an activity for physical activity is that the stress reduction that can result from physical activity may be further reduced by social support. There is considerable variation in how social support is conceptualized and measured. Social support for physical activity can be instrumental, as in giving someone access to an exercise class; informational, as in telling someone about a walking program in the neighborhood; emotional, as in having buddies or teammates in an exercise program; or appraising, as in providing feedback and reinforcement for increasing step count.

Best Practices: Assessment



In connection with the Washington Wellness Worksite criteria checklist component, “*Understand Your Population*”, assessment is crucial to any wellness program. It must be demonstrated how the workforce population profile was used to plan agency actions of programs to support employee health. Seeking and using employee input in decision making for your wellness plans will help your agency to meet the criteria checklist component, “*Engage Employees and Families*”. Completing an assessment of the work environment will help your agency to meet the criteria checklist component, “*Reshape the Internal Work Environment to Foster Wellness.*”

Assess your employee population for readiness for change and current physical activity level; consider assessing type, duration, intensity, and frequency of physical activity. Who makes up your workforce (i.e. gender, age, ethnicity, health status)? How would programs or policies be received by each of these groups? Seek employee input regarding different types of activities/strategies before implementing. Employee surveys regarding physical activity practices, level of fitness, knowledge about physical activity, attitudes about their own physical activity, and perceptions of how well the worksite supports physical activity may reveal potential strategies. Such surveys can also provide useful baseline measures for follow-up measurement, which is important for demonstrating improvement. In assessing the employee population, also consider such characteristics as age, gender, and culture/ethnicity/race.

Sample questions to assess physical activity of employees:

<p>How many minutes per week do you engage in physical aerobic activity*?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than 30 minutes per week • 30-89 minutes per week • 90-149 minutes per week • 150-210 minutes per week • Other, please specify <p>How would you rate intensity of the majority of your weekly physical activity*?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low intensity • Moderate intensity • High intensity, vigorous <p>How many days per week do you engage in muscle-strengthening activities*?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 days per week • 1 day per week • 2 days per week • 3 days per week • Greater than 3 days per week <p>Do you feel you get enough physical exercise?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No • Additional Comment 	<p>Do you participate in or use any of the following. Mark all that apply.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking Trail • Gym • Fitness center/weight room • Home Fitness Equipment • Stairwell (daily) • Other, please specify <p>If you do not use any of the above, what are your reasons for not doing so?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too busy • Not enough equipment • Don't know how to operate equipment • Don't like to sweat • Childcare • Other, please specify <p>If a group fitness activity was organized through the worksite (i.e. hiking, walking, sports, etc.) would you participate?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No • Additional Comment
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The following links from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services offer for more information on assessing the workplace and employee population. Included in the first link and the second link are sample surveys for physical activity and wellness.

http://dhs.wi.gov/health/physicalactivity/pdf_files/Worksite%20toolkit/step3.pdf and
http://dhs.wi.gov/health/physicalactivity/pdf_files/Worksite%20toolkit/AppendixCsurvey.pdf

Understand the barriers to physical activity your employees face. The major barriers *most* people face when trying to increase physical activity are:

- Lack of time
- Inadequate access to convenient and affordable fitness facilities
- Lack of safe environments in which to be active

However, employers should be mindful of other barriers to physical activity related to age, gender, socio-economic status, popular media messages, issues of body image and body size, and fitness levels.

A sample questionnaire for assessing employees' barriers to physical activity can be found at the following link from North Carolina WorkSmart tool kit:

http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/Resources/wwtoolkit/1_docs/move_more/MM_AppM%20Barriers.pdf

Employee interest assessments are a key tool to use when designing your program. They can improve employee participation by building employee ownership and support of a program. The assessment has four main purposes:

- Introduce employees to worksite wellness
- Get input from employees
- Help to launch a successful wellness program
- Communicate to employees their role in building the program

Employee interest surveys often use a Likert scale of interest, where employees rank their likelihood of or interest in participating in various types of programs (very unlikely, unlikely, uncertain, likely, very likely). The survey can also include details such as how appealing different times of the day are (before work, after work, during lunch, etc). Likert scales are useful for survey questionnaires because they lend themselves well to comparisons over time and are easily translated into the stages of change theory.

The following is a link to a sample employee interest survey. (Physical activity is only one component of this particular survey)

http://www.welcoa.org/freeresources/pdf/dc_alleggheny_needs.pdf

Note: Employees may be curious to know the results of the survey. Be sure to keep them informed and let them know what you are planning. This will help build more interest in the programs and policies that will be developed.

Assess Your Organization

A successful program must work within your organization's physical environment, management structure, work culture, and activities. Assess the workplace for current strengths and weaknesses.

By looking at the work environment, you can begin to identify opportunities for creating changes that will promote healthy choices among your employees. Questions to ask might include, "What facilities (i.e. gym, shower) are offered that could encourage physical activity?" or "What parts of the building (i.e. stairs) and surrounding area (i.e. walking path) can be used to develop a wellness program?" The assessment results can also be used as baseline measurements used for evaluation.

The following sample survey contains a section on worksite physical activity access:
http://www.sonoma-county.org/scech/wellness/pdf/worksite_health_access_survey.pdf

Other assessments of the physical work environment include sections on physical activity and the worksite, such as Thurston County WorkWell's Action Planning for a Healthy Workforce Assessment <http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/personalhealth/wellness/Planning.html> and the Checklist of Health Promotion Environments at the Worksite (CHEW) http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/hwi/program_design/environmental_audits.htm.

Assess the work culture to ensure that your strategy is compatible. Is the work culture competitive? Would the introduction of competitive activities enhance participation, or in a more collaborative culture, might they be detrimental?

Best Practices: Evaluation and Measurement



Evaluation is an essential way to meet the Washington Wellness Worksite criteria checklist component, *Use Information and Measurement*, which requires documentation of a process for demonstrating improvement and documentation of improvement itself.

Wellness program evaluation is advisable for two major reasons. First, worksite wellness programs are still relatively new endeavors for most organizations and their rationale and justification for existence are not always firmly established. As a result, care and effort should be taken to document the effectiveness and value of the program to the organization. Second, evaluation will provide you with information to refine your program to better meet the wellness goals and employee needs. Decide up front what success looks like and how you will measure it, either qualitatively or quantitatively. Consider evaluation while you are designing or beginning an activity so that you collect any necessary information.

You can measure process and you can measure outcome/impact. Process indicators will be easier to measure and will give you quicker feedback on how well the program/activity is being accepted and used by employees. Examples of process indicators include: number of participants in a program, number of hits on a website, participant satisfaction, policy or environment change tracking. Outcome evaluation can be more difficult and take longer. Examples of outcome measures include: pre/post test surveys (these can measure changes in knowledge, attitude, intention, current practice, etc), physical activity logs, health indicators, well being/quality of life, or work-related outcomes (job satisfaction, absenteeism).

Helpful Resources:

http://www.sonoma-county.org/scech/wellness/pdf/evaluation_options.pdf

http://www.welcoa.org/freeresources/pdf/fund_of_evaluation.pdf

Examples of measures:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• staff turnover• absenteeism• corporate costs/return on investment• health care utilization/disability• participation satisfaction• job satisfaction• pedometer step count• minutes exercised• website hits• attitude toward exercise• program attendance/participation• attitude toward how supportive the work environment is	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• staff perception of control and resource availability• improvements in knowledge• biometric measures such as BMI• changes in disease risk• stress levels• health markers such as blood pressure• depression or self esteem scores• changes to the physical environment• changes to policies• changes in the workplace culture (norms)• employee morale
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Note: consider the Healthy People 2010 objectives when choosing your measures. If possible, measure type, intensity, frequency, and duration of weekly activities.