



Workplace Wellness: Low-Cost Activities That Work

Wellness issues important to you – brought to you by the benefit specialists at Tailor Made Benefit Solutions.

Workplace wellness programs that support employees and the environment that they work in not only have a positive impact on employee morale, they often present a positive return on investment for the employer, too. Workplace wellness programs can be extensive and sometimes expensive. However, there are ways for small employers to make positive changes at little or no cost.

Program Activities

Nutrition Activities

Fruit and Vegetable Consumption

- Provide healthy eating reminders and prompts to employees via multiple means (e.g. posters, e-mail, payroll stuffers).
- Offer appealing, low-cost fruits and vegetables in vending machines and in the cafeteria.
- Provide cookbooks, food preparation and cooking classes for employees' families.
- Ensure on-site cafeterias follow healthy cooking practices and set nutritional standards for foods served that align with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
- Offer healthy foods at meetings, conferences and catered events.
- Use point-of-decision prompts as a marketing technique to promote healthier choices.
- Provide healthy cooking demonstrations that teach life-long skills (e.g., fruit and vegetable selection and healthy preparation).
- Provide taste-testing opportunities at the workplace.
- Offer employee-led campaigns, demonstrations or programs.
- Offer local fruits and vegetables at the workplace (i.e. workplace farmer's market or community-supported agriculture drop-off point).
- Use competitive pricing (price non-nutritious foods in vending machines and cafeterias at higher prices).
- Provide protected time and dedicated space away from the work area for breaks and lunch.
- Make kitchen equipment available to employees.
- Provide an opportunity for on-site gardening, if possible.

Sweetened Beverage Consumption

- Make water available throughout the day.
- Offer appealing, low-cost healthy drink options in vending machines and the cafeteria.

- Modify worksite vending contracts to increase the number of healthy options.
- Price non-nutritious beverages at a higher cost.
- Use point-of-decision prompts to promote healthier choices.

Portion Control

- Label foods to show serving size and/or nutritional content.
- Provide food models, food scales for weighing and pictures to help employees assess portion size.
- Offer appropriate portion sizes at meetings, workplace events and in the cafeteria.

Breastfeeding

- Support nursing mothers by providing rooms for expressing milk in a secure and relaxed environment, a refrigerator for storage of breast milk, policies that support breast feeding and lactation education programs.
- Offer flexible scheduling and/or on-site or near-site child care to allow for milk expression during the workday.
- Adopt alternative work options (i.e. teleworking, part-time, extended maternity) for breast-feeding mothers returning to work.
- Educate personnel on the importance of supporting breast-feeding co-workers.

TV & Food Advertising

- Place TVs in non-eating areas of the workplace.
- Limit food advertising in the cafeteria (e.g., print and other media).

Physical/Weight Management Activities

- Allow access to on- and off-worksite gyms and recreational activities before, during, and after work hours
- Offer and encourage participation in after work recreation or leagues.
- Provide cash incentives or reduced insurance costs for participation in physical activity and/or weight management or maintenance activities.
- Provide shower and/or changing facilities on-site.
- Provide outdoor exercise areas such as fields and trails for employee use.
- Provide bicycle racks in safe, convenient and accessible locations.
- Offer on-site fitness opportunities, such as group classes or personal training.
- Provide an on-site exercise facility.
- Set up programs that have strong social support systems and incentives, such as:
 - Buddy or team physical activity goals
 - Programs that involve workers and family
 - Programs to encourage physical activity, such as pedometer walking challenges
 - Discounted or subsidized memberships at local health clubs, recreation centers or YMCAs
- Offer flexible work hours to allow for physical activity during the day.
- Support physical activity breaks during the workday, such as stretching or walking.
- Host walk-and-talk meetings.

- Map out on-site trails or nearby walking routes and destinations.
- Have employees map out their own biking or walking route to and from work.
- Post motivational signs at elevators and escalators to encourage stair usage.
- Provide exercise/physical fitness messages and information to employees.
- Provide or support recreation leagues and other physical activity events on-site or in the community.
- Start employee activity clubs such as walking or bicycling clubs.
- Provide on-site child care facilities to facilitate physical activity.
- Sponsor a bike to work day and reward employees who participate.
- Set up a box and solicit fitness and health tips.

General Health Education Activities

- Have a current policy outlining the requirements and functions of a comprehensive workplace wellness program.
- Have a wellness plan in place that addresses the purpose, nature, duration, resources required, participants and expected results of a workplace wellness program.
- Orient employees with the wellness program and give them copies of the physical activity, nutrition and tobacco use policies.
- Promote and encourage employee participation in the physical activity/fitness and nutrition education/weight management program.
- Provide health education information to employees.
- Have a committee that meets at least once a month to oversee the wellness program.
- Offer regular health education presentations on various physical activity, nutrition and wellness-related topics. Ask voluntary health associations, health care providers and/or public health agencies to offer on-site education classes.
- Host a health fair as a kick-off event or as a celebration for completion of a wellness campaign.
- Designate specific areas to support employees, including educational opportunities for diabetics and nursing mothers.
- Conduct preventive wellness screenings for blood pressure, body composition, blood cholesterol and diabetes.
- Provide confidential health risk assessments.
- Offer on-site weight management/maintenance programs for employees.
- Add weight management/maintenance, nutrition and physical activity counseling as a member benefit in health insurance contracts.

Tobacco Cessation

- Establish a company policy prohibiting tobacco use anywhere on the property.
- Provide prompts/posters to support no tobacco use policy.
- Establish a policy supporting participation in smoking cessation activities during duty time (flex-time).
- Provide counseling through an individual, group or telephone counseling program on-site.
- Provide counseling through a health plan sponsored individual, group or telephone counseling program.
- Provide cessation medications through health insurance.

This article is not intended to be exhaustive nor should any discussion or opinions be construed as legal advice. Readers should contact legal counsel for legal advice.