

Best practices for wellness programs

Planning and Design

- *Know your audience:* Assess knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and health status using claims data, demographic data, biometric on-site testing, surveys, and/or focus groups.¹
- *Maximize program relevancy:* Engage fund participants to ensure that the program design is relevant to them and their families.²
- *Facilitate and demonstrate respect:* Engage unions, management, workers, and families by working together toward the achievement of common goals.²
- *Establish clear operating principles:* Set clear operating principles to help define priorities, direct program design, and facilitate the allocation of resources.²
- *Start with achievable targets:* Build the program incrementally, using ongoing evaluation of employee participation, behavior change and organizational support.²
- *Adopt consistent policies to support program aims:* Align program activities with the physical and organizational environment, e.g., if you provide tobacco cessation services, support tobacco use prohibitions on worksite premises.¹
- *Integrate related systems:* Make connections between current programs and policies and integrate them under the umbrella of total health.^{2,3}
- *Adopt and maintain a long-term outlook:* A long-term outlook increases the chance of sustainability and brings more value to an initiative.²

Implementation

- *Recruit leadership to champion the program:* Leaders should visibly demonstrate commitment and be active participants.¹
- *Engage mid-level management:* Mid-level management can respond to the needs/preferences of both workers and upper management, and can promote wellness programs and connect workers to appropriate resources.²
- *Communicate:* Deliver clear and consistent messages to all stakeholders. Identify the most feasible and effective methods of communication for each stakeholder group.^{1,2}
- *Develop creative ways to stimulate participation:* Use testimonials from successful participants. Use incentives. Recognize members who achieve goals. Account for the work environment—location, type of work, employer policies—when creating ways to engage participants.^{1,2}
- *Ensure confidentiality:* Communicate your plans to fund participants to ensure confidentiality and adhere to standards meant to protect confidentiality.²

**Track & Evaluate
Results**

- *Track process/implementation data:* To improve upon the program and present a snapshot of the program to relevant stakeholders, collect data such as: number of fund participants involved; time; costs; company policies that impact health; and employee/management satisfaction.^{1,2}
- *Measure and analyze outcome data:* Gather data prior to implementation and at various times, post-implementation, to determine whether there were changes in participants' health status and whether planned objectives were met.^{1,2}
- *Learn from experience:* Make adjustments to the program based on results and feedback from stakeholders.²

References

¹ Rosen M, Spaulding T. Best practices for wellness programs. *Occupational Health and Safety* July 2009. Available at: <http://ohsonline.com/Articles/2009/07/01/Best-Practices-for-Wellness-Programs.aspx> Accessed on October 1, 2010.

² National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. Essential Elements of Effective Workplace Programs and Policies for Improving Worker Health and Wellbeing. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/worklife/essentials.html> Accessed on October 1, 2010.

³ Association of Schools of Public Health. Creating a culture of wellness: Building health care reform on prevention and public health. Washington, D.C.; July, 2009. Available at: <http://www.asph.org/UserFiles/Prevention-and-Public-Health-Strategies-for-HC-Reform-asph-policy-paper2009.pdf> Accessed on October 4, 2010.

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