

Starting a Wellness Committee at Your Worksite



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Benefits of a Wellness Program



Wellness is about empowering all of your employees, regardless of current health status, to be as healthy as they can be. A well-designed wellness program can...

- Improve employee health
- Reduce absenteeism
- Reduce presenteeism
- Improve productivity
- Improve employee morale
- Decrease medical claims

Why You Need a Wellness Committee

A successful wellness team is the vehicle to promote and execute the wellness-related functions throughout the company. A wellness team gives the program credibility and energy, as well as provides stability, lightens the work load, and broadens your reach.

- A team brings together people with different talents and backgrounds
- A dedicated group of people can more effectively implement wellness programs than just one person
- A wellness committee assures the sustainability of your program

What a Wellness Committee Does

The primary functions of a wellness committee include:

- Evaluating the current programs, services, and policies available at your workplace
- Assessing employee needs and preferences
- Developing and periodically updating a wellness program operating plan, including a vision statement, goals, and objectives
- Implementing, monitoring, and evaluating wellness program activities



Step 1 What You Need to Get Started

Having support from senior leadership is critical to the success of your wellness program. Identify a senior leader who will be your wellness champion and is able to:

- Allocate budget and resources for the wellness program
- Advocate for the wellness program to upper management
- Change or implement policies and procedures to create a healthier work environment
- Participate in wellness programs

Identify a committee chairperson. This person must be able to:

- Communicate effectively with all employees at all levels within the organization
- Define priorities for the wellness program
- Work well with a variety of personalities
- Establish an agenda and stay on task
- Meet goals and deadlines
- Motivate others
- Have a passion for wellness

Step 2 Recruiting Committee Members

Identify people from different departments and different levels within your organization. Strive for a diverse committee that represents all of your employees, from senior leadership to line workers. Committee members do not need to be the healthiest people in your company; they need to be respected by co-workers, able to work as part of a team, able to communicate effectively, and willing to participate.

Try to get representation from a variety of departments within your organization. For example, invite someone from:

- Human Resources
- Marketing
- Information Technology
- Facilities
- Food Service
- Occupational Health
- Finance
- Management
- Manufacturing
- Administration

Committees can be any size. Larger companies are more likely to have larger committees. Aim for 8-12 members to start.





Step 3 Clearly Define Roles and Expectations

Clearly defined roles and expectations will help your committee function smoothly. In addition to the traits listed in Step 1, the chairperson's role is to:

- Schedule and facilitate regular monthly meetings
- Develop and distribute agendas for meetings
- Act as liaison between the wellness committee and the senior leader wellness champion
- Oversee planning and execution of wellness programs and activities
- Ensure everyone on the committee is active and engaged

In addition to a committee chair person, other roles you may consider defining are:

VICE CHAIR

- Assists chair in all her/his duties

SECRETARY

- Takes minutes at meetings
- Types up and distributes minutes within a week after each meeting

TREASURER

- Manages the wellness budget

WEBMASTER

- Keeps the wellness program's website up to date

DATA MASTER

- Keeps statistics for wellness programs, such as participation numbers, satisfaction, changes in behavior, and outcomes.

All committee members, regardless of role, are expected to:

- Attend at least 75% of meetings
- Embrace the mission and vision of the wellness program
- Serve the full term established for committee members (typically 1-2 years).
- Participate in the annual continuing education program for the wellness committee
- Lead/co-lead at least one program or activity per year
- Actively promote all wellness programs and activities to co-workers
- Have supervisor's approval to participate on the wellness committee, which includes planning and promotion of wellness committee activities and programs during the work day

Some companies create a Wellness Committee Member Agreement, to be signed by the member and his/her supervisor. This document outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Wellness Committee and assures that everyone understands those requirements. See Sample "Wellness Committee Member Agreement" in the appendix.

Once you have your committee chairperson and members, schedule your first meeting!



Step 4 Lay the Groundwork

While it will be very tempting to start scheduling wellness activities right away, it is very important to build a strong foundation first. Your first wellness committee meeting covers some basic groundwork so everyone understands their role.

- Make sure everyone knows each other!
Do a fun ice breaker.
- Create a directory of committee members and distribute it to all members.
- Select a note taker (if not already assigned).
- Review roles and expectations of committee members. If you are asking committee members to read and sign the member agreement, review it and make sure everyone talks with their supervisor about participating on the wellness committee.
- Establish a regular meeting schedule and frequency. Monthly is recommended. The chair or appointee should send meeting invitations for the whole year.
- Come up with a name and/or tagline for your wellness program. Ask your marketing department to create a logo for you.
- Develop a mission and vision statement for your wellness program. See “Creating a Mission and Vision Statement” in the appendix.

Step 5 Collect and Review Data

Don't skip this step! Collecting and reviewing relevant data will help you identify what topics and issues to address with your programming. The data also serves as a baseline so you can gauge the effectiveness of your program.

Determine what data you have and what you need to collect. Potential data sources include:

- CDC Worksite Health Scorecard
- Health Risk Assessment
- Biometric screening results
- Employee interest survey
- Health insurance claims data
- Demographics of workforce (age, sex, education)
- Absenteeism (sick days, worker's compensation, short and long term disability)

Step 6 Craft an Operating Plan

Once you have collected and reviewed your data, you need to create an operating plan for your program. The operating plan is the central document that serves as a road map for your program and what it will accomplish.

Do not underestimate the importance of an operating plan – it describes what your wellness program will accomplish and includes what, why, where, when, and who. Be patient. This step takes time.

The operating plan should include these elements:

1. **The vision and mission statement for your wellness program.** You wrote this in Step 4.
2. **Specific goals with measurable objectives.** Goals and objectives are your compass and ensure you are moving in the right direction. Make sure they are SMART goals.
3. **Timelines for implementation.** Establishing a calendar of events and timeline for completion helps keep your program on track and holds people accountable.
4. **Roles and responsibilities for each objective.** Take advantage of people's individual strengths and talents when assigning roles. (refer back to step 3)
5. **An itemized budget.** This ensures you have the resources needed to carry out the plan. Having a budget is optimal, however if resources are limited, there are ways to be creative. Look for free resources and services in your community.
6. **Marketing strategies to promote your plan.** Use multiple methods of communication, including printed, oral, and electronic. Effectively communicating is the

determining factor between a successful program and an ineffective program. See "Communication Strategies for Your Wellness Program" in the appendix.

7. **An evaluation plan to measure your goals and objectives.** Measures should include participation, participant satisfaction, changes in knowledge, attitudes and behavior, and ultimately changes in environment and culture. Before you start your program, develop an evaluation plan that aligns with your objectives and goals, and identifies the outcomes you will measure.

Once your operating plan is finalized, refer to it regularly to keep your program on track. Share it with senior leaders and wellness committee members. Review and update the operating plan yearly.

What is a SMART goal?

Specific - Each goal should clearly define what, why, where, when, who.

Measurable - Each goal should have clear criteria for measuring progress towards completion.

Agreed upon - The stakeholders agree on the content and definition of each goal.

Realistic - Each goal is within the resources, knowledge and time available.

Time-bound - Each goal has a timeframe for completion.

Step 7 Build on the Foundation

Once you have built the foundation for your wellness program, use ongoing meetings to continue planning and evaluating your programs and activities. Collect new data every year to track your program's effectiveness. Use multiple communication methods to keep promoting your program. Keep it fresh. What worked in the first year of your program may not work as well in the third year.



Tips for a Lasting Committee:

- Have someone take notes at every meeting and distribute minutes afterward
- Ensure committee members participate in continuing education each year
- Re-evaluate your program and update your operating plan annually
- As new members come on board, share the operating plan with them
- **Have fun!**

Appendices

- Sample Wellness Committee Member Agreement
- Creating a Mission and Vision Statement
- Communication Strategies for Your Wellness Program
- WELCOA's 7 Benchmarks
- 10 Secrets of Successful Worksite Wellness Teams

Additional Resources

- CDC.gov
- ExcellusBCBS.com
- Healthypeople.gov
- Nationalwellness.org
- Smarterlunchrooms.org
- Welcoa.org

