

Facts on Health Promotion for Staff

Did You Know...?

- Approximately two-thirds of all deaths in adults aged 25 years and older in the United States can be attributed to cardiovascular disease, cancer and diabetes. The primary causes of these conditions are four preventable risk factors – tobacco use, poor eating habits, inadequate physical activity and being overweight.
- Obesity and related chronic diseases cost employers up to \$93 billion per year in health insurance claims.
- The cost of obesity, including medical expenditures and absenteeism, for an employer with 1,000 employees is estimated to be \$277,000 per year.ⁱ
- Health insurance expenses are the fastest growing cost component for employers. Since 2000, employment-based health insurance premiums have increased 87%, and premiums for employer sponsored health insurance have been rising four times faster on average than workers' earnings.ⁱⁱ
- A meta-review of 42 published studies of worksite health promotion programs shows:
 - Average 28% reduction in sick leave absenteeism
 - Average 26% reduction in health costs
 - Average 30% reduction in workers' compensation and disability management claims costs
 - Average \$5.93-to-\$1 savings-to-cost ratio ⁱⁱⁱ

Why are employee wellness programs important?

More than 6.7 million people are employed by public school systems in the United States – about 3.5 million teachers and 3.2 million other employees. This large workforce is charged with one of the nation's most critical functions - preparing our youth to become successful and productive citizens. When school districts ignore the health of their employees, a valuable asset of the nation's school system is put at risk. Further, the conditions that affect the health of employees also influence the health and learning of students. Protecting the physical and mental health of school employees is integral to protecting the health of students and ensuring their academic success.ⁱⁱ

Potential benefits of employee wellness programs include:

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| ▪ Decreased employee absenteeism | ▪ Attractiveness to prospective employees |
| ▪ Lower health care and insurance costs | ▪ Healthy role models for students |
| ▪ Increased employee retention | ▪ Positive community image |
| ▪ Improved employee morale | ▪ Increased productivity |
| ▪ Fewer work-related injuries | ▪ Increased motivation to teach about health |
| ▪ Fewer worker compensation and disability claims | ▪ Increased motivation to practice healthy behaviors |

Facts on School Employee Wellness

What can schools do to improve employee wellness?

1. Identify a wellness leader
2. Offer all staff members accessible and free or low-cost health assessments at least once a year
3. Complete a yearly employee wellness needs or interest assessment with staff
4. Identify potential resources and create a plan using your needs assessment results that includes opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity
5. Establish a communication plan (newsletters, emails, bulletin boards, etc.), implement offerings and provide incentives to ensure school staff are actively participating in physical activity and healthy eating programs
6. Provide strategies to support staff in modeling healthy eating and physical activity behaviors
7. Ensure all foods and beverages served and sold at staff meetings, school-sponsored staff events, and in the staff lounge meet USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards.
8. Evaluate annually and adapt the plan when necessary
9. Sustain the program and encourage your district to adopt a wellness policy for all employees
10. Negotiate with your human resources department and/or health care provider to ensure that obesity prevention and treatment is covered in district health insurance policies

What is the Healthy Schools Program?

The Healthy Schools Program is an initiative of the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, founded by the American Heart Association and the William J. Clinton Foundation.

The Healthy Schools Program focuses on helping schools:

- Improve the food and beverages during the regular and extended school day
- Increase physical activity
- Improve the quality of health and physical education programs
- Establish wellness programs for school employees

Participation in the Healthy Schools Program is an excellent way to jump start the implementation of the district wellness policy at your school and to be recognized for your efforts. Additional benefits of joining the Healthy Schools Program include:

- **Access to our resource database** that includes practical information, grant opportunities and discounts on tools to assist in implementing healthy changes in schools.
- **Extensive support** including free online presentations and phone conferences on topics like school meals, health education, physical activity, employee wellness and more.
- **Networking opportunities** with others across the country working towards the same goal.
- **Promotional tools** for schools to publicize their efforts toward creating and sustaining healthier environments for students and staff.
- **National recognition** to celebrate small victories and big successes.
- **Monthly newsletters** filled with school success stories.
- Services provided at no cost!

For more information on Employee Wellness please contact Michelle Owens at Michelle.Owens@HealthierGeneration.org

ⁱ CDC – Workplace Health Promotion data <http://www.cdc.gov/workplacehealthpromotion/businesscase>

ⁱⁱ Directors of Health Promotion and Education. (2005) *School Employee Wellness: A Guide for Protecting the Assets of our Nations Schools*. Washington, D.C.: Author.

ⁱⁱⁱ Chapman LS. *Meta-evaluation of worksite health promotion economic return studies. The Art of HealthPromotion. 2003;6(6):1-16.*