

# Creating a Workplace Wellness Committee

## A TOOLKIT FOR EMPLOYERS

### Congratulations!

By choosing to implement a Workplace Wellness Program you are making a smart investment in the health and productivity of your people and your organization. This toolkit will help you get started by providing step-by-step instructions on how to create one of the most important elements of your program: **the Workplace Wellness Committee**.

Inside the toolkit you'll find helpful tips, tools and resources you can use to recruit, organize and manage an effective in-house Wellness Committee that drives results.

**GO YOU**<sup>®</sup>



**People are more likely to succeed in their efforts to adopt healthier lifestyles – like exercising, quitting smoking, eating well – when they have a supportive environment in which to practice these new behaviors.**

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## Why Wellness in the Workplace Makes Sense



### What do we mean by “healthy lifestyle”?

It’s the day-to-day choices we each make that can improve our health and well-being – like eating well, being physically active, not smoking, managing stress, wearing seatbelts – just to name a few.



Rising health care costs have prompted many organizations to look for new ways to lower expenses. One of the best ways to lower costs is to improve the health of your workers. Healthy people cost less, are more productive, and contribute more to your organization’s performance.

Workplace wellness programs offer ways to help people get healthy and stay healthy. Implementing a comprehensive workplace wellness program is an excellent way to help individuals practice healthy lifestyles and change unhealthy habits to reduce their risks of developing high-cost health problems.

Programs that encourage wellness and healthy lifestyles have a measurable, positive impact on the lives of your workers and their families – and on the health of your organization’s bottom line.

In addition, healthy employees are happier and tend to stay at their current place of employment, reducing turn over and hiring costs.

Since most workers today spend a good portion of their waking hours on the job, the workplace is a logical and practical place to reach them. In addition, research shows that people are more likely to succeed in their efforts to adopt healthier lifestyles – like exercising, quitting smoking, eating well – when they have a supportive environment in which to practice these new behaviors.

# The Goal of a Workplace Wellness Program



The goal of a workplace wellness program is to encourage employees and their families to adopt and practice healthy lifestyles to improve their physical and mental well-being. The goal is achieved by making the work environment a place where:

- **Healthy behaviors are promoted, encouraged and supported**
- **Employees have easy access to programs to help them make better lifestyle choices**
- **Employees have the opportunity to practice healthy lifestyle behaviors**

To ensure success, it is imperative that programs have the support of senior management so that healthy work environment objectives are integrated into the organization's overall vision, mission and strategy. Programs should also use a multi-level approach to influence each person's decisions and abilities to practice positive behaviors or to make needed lifestyle changes. The multi-level approach incorporates three areas of focus:

- **Individual: Programs must motivate change in individual employee behavior by increasing people's knowledge about health and wellness, influencing attitudes or challenging beliefs about health.**

Examples: Encouraging employees to take 'baby steps' toward change such as taking the stairs, parking further away from the entrance of the building, bringing a healthier lunch to work three times a week versus dining out.

- **Interpersonal (Groups): Programs must recognize that groups at the worksite can provide social identity and support and should look to create and encourage these opportunities for group interaction.**

Examples: Offering work-based weight loss programs (individual or a team-based weight loss challenge), support groups for tobacco cessation, and walking clubs.

- **Organizational: Programs must ensure that leadership, policies, practices and the physical work environment are supportive and conducive to healthy behavior change.**

Examples: Mandating a tobacco-free worksite, instituting healthy vending machine policies, requiring healthy food choices in the cafeteria, allowing time for physical activity (such as walking groups) during the workday.

# The Role of a Workplace Wellness Committee



The main role of a wellness committee is to communicate, participate, motivate, and support the organization's worksite wellness program in order to:

- Create a healthy worksite and a culture of wellness
- Foster collaboration and enthusiasm among employees
- Provide a communication "link" between employees and management

Organizations that create a wellness committee benefit in several ways.

The committee is able to help:

- Represent and share co-workers' ideas and concerns
- Reshape the company's culture to promote healthy living
- Encourage a positive work environment

The committee is made up of a peer group of employees who guide wellness information and activities for their worksite wellness program. In effect, the committee member becomes a wellness "champion" responsible for promoting the organization's goal of keeping teammates and their families healthy. Committee members provide critical "word-of-mouth" advertising that is essential to building strong awareness and participation.

It takes an efficient team to plan, implement and evaluate a successful wellness program; and committee members are essential to getting the work done. With multiple people contributing to the effort, you'll have hands-on help to develop your strategy, implement tactics, coordinate and promote activities and measure success.

If possible, the committee should be made up of people from all levels of the organization and represent a cross-section of employees. This ensures your program has input and ideas from diverse perspectives so that you can understand and meet the needs of your workplace audience and continually improve your program.

## Keep In Mind:

Committee members should be enthusiastic and ready to talk about healthy behaviors and to encourage worksite wellness program participation.

# Easy Steps to Create a Wellness Committee

## Keep In Mind:

Joint groups responsible for the wellness program will vary based on size of the organization. For organizations with multiple worksites or departments, recruit a committee member from each location or department.

## 1. Define the wellness committee's composition

Identify who within the company will facilitate and lead the committee members. It is recommended that there be a minimum of three committee members and no more than twelve depending on the size of the organization.<sup>5</sup> Based on the organization, two joint groups may be needed:

**The wellness committee** – this is the oversight group that has formal responsibility for executing and supporting the program, as well as promoting and motivating people to participate in the program activities.

**The wellness planning team** – this team is a subset of the wellness committee and is responsible for the strategy and planning activities of the wellness program in conjunction with the wellness committee. In addition to wellness committee members, this group may consist of people who have job functions specifically related to the implementation of the wellness program, such as health and safety, occupational health, and human resources.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Recruit Members

Members should represent a cross-section of the employee population, representing various occupations, locations and demographics to ensure complete representation of the entire workforce population.

Wellness committee should have the following qualifications:

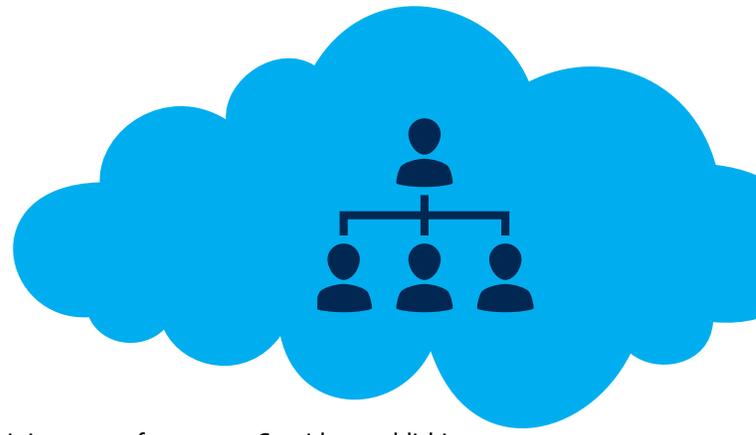
- Respected and trusted by fellow employees
- Dependable and reliable
- Personal interest in health
- Sincere desire to help others enhance their quality of life
- Commitment to help the program succeed
- Available to meet at least once a month
- Willingness to promote the importance of the health and wellness program among peers and co-workers
- Good communication and interpersonal skills – not intimidated to talk to people

Recruiting interested or prospective members should be done by letter or in person. Other methods of recruiting members include announcements, flyers, e-mails, and employee newsletters.

## 3. Establish Committee Procedures & Ground Rules

In order to be successful, one of the most important parts of a wellness committee is to establish its procedures. Wellness Committee meetings should occur on a regular, scheduled basis. The committee can meet once a month, every other month or quarterly for approximately 30 minutes to two hours, depending on the size of the organization. Each meeting should have a formal agenda along with minutes and supporting documents.





## Keep In Mind:

A wellness program should have a destination. As you collaborate w/ your wellness committee on achieving the objectives, keep in mind of the following:

- focus on written policies and guidelines
- focus on making information and learning resources available
- focus on group activities so employees work together to support and encourage healthier lifestyles
- develop a wellness program that is visible to both employees and their family members

Building collaboration across the team is important for success. Consider establishing “ground rules” to establish an environment where committee members feel valued, safe and empowered. Some potential rules to consider:

- **Be prompt** – arrive on time so meetings can begin promptly
- **Be courteous** – listen attentively and respectfully to all ideas and concerns
- **Be democratic** – establish “voting” procedures for determining which ideas get implemented
- **Be trustworthy** – protect employee confidentiality when sharing ideas/concerns with the group
- **Be dependable** – always follow through on promises and commitments you make

## 4. Plan a Committee Kick off Meeting

A kickoff meeting will help set the framework for how the committee will work together and how the planning will be carried out. To ensure optimal participation, make it easy for members to participate. Consider the following when planning the kick off meeting:

- **Send invitations at least two weeks in advance**
- **Provide a way for people to “call in” if they work in a different office location**
- **Select a time that accommodates different shift workers and/or time zones**
- **Provide name tags and have participants introduce themselves and say why they joined**
- **Collect names, phone numbers, etc. so you can create a “master” contact list for the team**

If possible, consider inviting a senior leader to join the kick off meeting. This helps demonstrate that management is “walking the talk” and shows the team that their efforts are valued and being recognized.

When planning the committee kickoff meeting, you should focus on achieving the following objectives:

- **Identify a chairperson to lead the worksite wellness committee**
- **Identify a committee member to take meeting minutes and coordinate future meetings**
- **Select a name for the committee and develop a mission statement, goals and objectives**
- **Provide or create a wellness program strategy and tactical implementation plan**
- **Develop an appropriate communication plan to promote the wellness program**

If available, your organization’s communications department may be able to offer ideas, guidance and assistance.

# Helpful Tools and Resources

## Cigna provides helpful ideas and guidance to support your wellness committee:

**The Well** – our health promotion and wellness website – provides a variety of free resources and tools your committee can tap into to help plan, promote, implement and evaluate successful worksite wellness programs and activities.

Visit **The Well** at [www.cigna.com/healthpromotion](http://www.cigna.com/healthpromotion).

The **Cigna Mix Six for Healthy Balance Toolkit** is a free online resource designed to help businesses, adults and kids take steps toward better health.

Find the Toolkit at [www.cigna.com/mixsixforhealthybalance](http://www.cigna.com/mixsixforhealthybalance)



1 – Eat Smart Move More North Carolina, “Saving Dollars and Making Sense Committee Guide” | [www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/CommitteeGuide/CommitteeGuide.html](http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/CommitteeGuide/CommitteeGuide.html)

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