

How to Implement a Worksite Wellness Program

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The main causes of sickness and death in the U.S. are all lifestyle related (e.g., tobacco use, physical inactivity, and poor nutrition). These factors cause the diseases that are the driving force behind rising healthcare costs such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. By empowering people to change their behavior, they can reduce their risks for these conditions, and, therefore, reduce healthcare utilization and costs.

But lowering healthcare costs alone is not the only reason to bring wellness to the worksite. An even greater reward comes from the change in productivity and engagement seen when employees become healthier, more energized members of the organization. The return on investment is substantial.

Although there is no single approach to wellness that will work at every worksite, there are seven benchmarks that are inherent in wellness programs that consistently produce positive results. These “Seven Benchmarks to a Well Workplace” were developed by the Wellness Councils of America (WELCOA), an Omaha-based non-profit organization dedicated to promoting healthier lifestyles for all Americans – especially through worksite health promotion.

The “Seven Benchmarks to a Well Workplace” are:

1. Capturing Senior Level Support
2. Creating Cohesive Teams
3. Collecting Data
4. Crafting an Operating Plan
5. Choosing Appropriate Interventions
6. Creating Supportive Environments
7. Carefully Evaluating Outcomes

The Well Workplace process provides a roadmap that can be used by a school administrator to develop and implement a results-oriented wellness program for administrators and their respective districts. Rather than randomly jumping in to a series of wellness programs, the Seven Benchmarks will guide an organization through a strategic planning process that will lead to a healthier, more productive, and highly engaged workforce.

According to WELCOA, more than 1000 companies across the U.S. have adopted the Well Workplace model. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska (BCBSNE) followed the “Seven Benchmarks to a Well Workplace” and received the Platinum Well Workplace Award from WELCOA in 2007. The Platinum Award is recognized by national health promotion experts as the highest standard for evaluating worksite wellness programs. BCBSNE is extremely proud to be the first Nebraska-based health insurance company to achieve Platinum status.