



*Northeastern Connecticut Chamber of Commerce, Inc.*

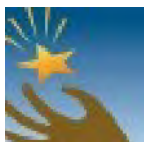
## *Worksite Wellness Tool Kit*



# Worksite Wellness

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### **HealthQuest Northeast Connecticut**

The Northeastern Connecticut Chamber of Commerce is a partner in the regional health and wellness collaborative known as **HealthQuest Northeast Connecticut**. Our focus is to reduce obesity-related chronic diseases and tobacco use through education, increasing physical activity, and improving access to better nutrition..



## What is Worksite Wellness?

Worksite Wellness refers to the education and activities that a business can do to promote healthy lifestyles for employees and their families. Wellness programs use different forms of illness prevention, stress management, and exercise, to develop and maintain a high level of well being in staff members. These programs work at adopting a "preventing" illness versus a "treating" illness philosophy. This Worksite Wellness tool kit outlines opportunities where business can develop a program that focuses on reducing the risk factors associated with diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, some cancers, arthritis and others. This resource does not address safety issues or injury prevention.

## Why Worksite Wellness?

More and more research indicates that it is in the employers' best economic interest to help employees improve their health. According to the Northeastern Connecticut Chamber of Commerce *Business Outlook Survey*, the average increase in the cost of health care insurance has been 16-20 percent each year for the last 5 years. For many businesses, medical costs can consume a significant percent of the companies profits. While some employers have gone to cost sharing, cost shifting, managed care plans, or other programs or incentives, these options merely shift costs. Only worksite health programs stand out as the long-term answer for keeping employees well in the first place. National statistics indicate 30-50% of your organization's total health care costs are as a result of lifestyle related behaviors of your employees, such as smoking, poor diet, and lack of exercise. An investment in your employees' health can yield long-term dividends. Healthy employees are more productive, with fewer sick days, fewer accidents, better morale and less turn-over. Participation in a worksite wellness program can produce a Return on Investment (ROI) of as much as \$3 to \$4 per \$1 invested. The payoff in dollars, as well as in quality of life, can have a significant impact on your company.

## What do I do to get started?

You've made that important decision to work towards wellness and now you need to learn what your next steps should be. Creating a climate of change that incorporates a "buy-in" at the senior level is critical to the success of the program. Develop a wellness team and empower them to create change.



## **Do we need to do a Health Risk Appraisal (HRA)?**

A Health Risk Appraisal is an important foundational step for a successful wellness program. It is generally a brief questionnaire that summarizes key individual characteristics and information that can be used to determine an individual's overall health

risk status. An HRA should be followed by specific opportunities for improving health, such as those offered by worksite wellness programs. HRAs serve as the starting point and are used to measure program impact.

## **Are there different programs for businesses of different size?**

If you are new to a wellness program or if your business has 50 or fewer employees you may want to start with a program that seeks to create awareness of health issues and uses a whole-group approach. Low-cost incentives are offered for various group activities designed to boost morale.

For companies that are larger in size and have a wellness program in place, an education and knowledge-building model works well if you have some corporate direction. It can involve spouses and offer incentives. This type of program offers group and some individual health risk reduction programming and works well if your employees are receptive to a program,



The best worksite wellness programs target two groups: employees that already have chronic disease (to make them healthier) and employees that are healthy (to keep them healthy and prevent illness later). Here are a few simple, yet important steps to get you started:

1. **Senior Level Support** - For any program to be successful, you must have senior management support. They must buy in to the fact that employees must be allowed time to participate in the program.

2. **Develop a Wellness Advisory Team** - Assemble a team of employees representing all levels of the organization. Members of the committee help shape the program by developing ideas and bringing concerns to the group. The team should be responsible for: developing a vision statement for the wellness program, setting goals and objectives for which the workers and the business should strive towards and developing a time line to meet those goals or objectives.

*Goal Example: Employees will have access to healthier food options.*

*Objective Example: Vending machines will include 50 percent healthy food options.*

*Time line/Detail Example: Mr. Smith will meet with vending machine company within the next 2 weeks to identify healthy food options which will be incorporated into the machines within the next month.*

Consider a kick off event that includes biometric screenings and Health Risk Assessments (HRAs). Collect as much baseline data as possible so you can determine improvements in absenteeism rates, turnover rates, productivity rates and general wellness.

3. **Create a Budget** - Develop a budget that will help you target your intervention areas that will provide the largest impact. Try to include employee incentives in your budget as they demonstrate the organization's commitment to the program and motivates employees to participate. Incentives vary, but can include such things as discounts to health clubs, pedometers, reduction in health insurance premiums, time off, etc.

4. **Programming** Now that you've completed the worksite assessment and employee interest survey and reviewed other available data and compiled the results, it's time to implement programs that would best meet your assessment results. Wellness programming can include several components and activities. This tool kit focuses on

prevention and behavior changes to reduce chronic diseases. Areas your business may wish to focus on include:

- A. General health education for disease risk factors
- B. Physical activity
- C. Nutrition
- D. Tobacco Cessation
- E. Mental Health and stress management



5. **Assess and Modify** - This stage seeks to strive for continuous quality improvement through constant evaluation and modification of the plan. An employee survey helps to identify needs and interests and provide information that can help determine program focus. Perform an annual SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) to help direct your plan. Design creative fun ways to target participation in the program i.e. Biggest Loser competitions, or corporate teams for walk or run events.



All businesses can improve the health of their employees and create a healthy environment and culture. Others have done it, and so can you!



## ***Getting Ideas for Activities and Programs***

Starting a worksite wellness program can be overwhelming. A good place to start is by convening your committee for a brainstorming session. Write down all suggestions and then evaluate them for their fit to your worksite based on the following criteria:

- ♦ To what degree does the idea pertain to nutrition, physical activity or smoking cessation?
- ♦ Is the idea practical within the worksite?
- ♦ Is there employee interest?
- ♦ Is there management interest?
- ♦ Is the idea results oriented?
- ♦ Does the idea address a real need at your worksite?
- ♦ What resources are needed for start up and to maintain on an ongoing basis?
- ♦ To what degree is this idea inclusive of all employees?

## ***Ideas, Ideas and More Ideas***

### **Nutrition:**

- ♦ Recipe exchange
- ♦ Salad Club
- ♦ Biggest Loser Competition
- ♦ Calorie Counters Group
- ♦ Fruit & snack bowl in break room
- ♦ Change vending products
- ♦ Vending wish list
- ♦ Bottled water dispenser
- ♦ Healthy food options at staff meetings
- ♦ Water filter for drinking water
- ♦ 5 A Day Challenge incentive program



### **Physical Activity:**

- ♦ Develop a walking group with a buddy system
- ♦ Walking route maps
- ♦ Stretching chart (how-to and progress)
- ♦ Announce stretch over PA system
- ♦ Health club or gym discounts
- ♦ Indoor walking course with directional signs

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## **Physical Activity (continued):**

- ♦ Conference walks rather than conferencing over coffee
- ♦ Physical activity incentive program
- ♦ Promote environment conducive to bike riding by installing bike racks at your worksite
- ♦ Make pedometers available for employee use
- ♦ Create corporate teams for bike, walk or race participation

## **Smoking:**

- ♦ Establish a policy of no-smoking on company property
- ♦ Provide incentives for smokers to use medicinal aids to quit smoking

## **Stress Management:**

- ♦ Establish an employee assistance program
- ♦ Provide on-site stress management programs i.e. relaxation training  
assertiveness training, time management
- ♦ Provide employee lounge for breaks
- ♦ Allow flex time work scheduling policies
- ♦ Offer on-site blood pressure screenings

## **Promotion and Awareness within Worksite:**

- ♦ Inspirational/informational posters throughout worksite
- ♦ Place educational materials about health issues in restrooms
- ♦ Award pins or trophies for stages of individual accomplishment
- ♦ Contact health clubs about purchasing equipment when they look to make an upgrade
- ♦ Form interest groups



## Sample employee health behavior and interest survey:

In a typical week, how often would you	0 days /wk	1-2 days/week	3-4 days/week	5 or more days /week
1. Eat at least five fruits or vegetables in a day?				
2. Buy healthy snacks if they were available in our vending machines or cafeterias (for example, fruit, veggies and dip, whole grain cereals)?				
3. I would volunteer to help maintain a healthy snack selection set up by employees (does not involve paying for supplies).	Yes	No		
4. Eat fruit if available free at our staff meetings or in break areas?				
5. Use a 15 minute break for activity (like stretching, yoga, or a walk) if there were a convenient place to be active?				
6. Make time for 30 minutes of physical activity per day?				
<b>To what extent are you interested in making the following healthy changes?</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Not at all interested</b>	<b>Somewhat interested</b>	<b>Very interested</b>
7. Stop smoking (or using any kind of tobacco)?				
8. Be more physically active?				

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To what extent are you interested in making the following healthy changes?	<i>N/A</i>	<i>Not at all interested</i>	<i>Somewhat interested</i>	<i>Very interested</i>
9. Eat more fruits and vegetables				
10. Lose weight				
11. Manage stress				
12. Other _____ Write in any other healthy changes important to you				
<b>The following questions are for employees who smoke:</b>	<i>Not at all likely</i>	<i>Not very likely</i>	<i>Somewhat likely</i>	<i>Very likely</i>
13. How likely are you to make a serious attempt to quit during the next 6 months?				
14. How willing are you to use quit medications (such as nicotine patch) if you could get them for free?				



15. Sometimes employees come together to form interest groups to support each other in various activities. The groups are informal, and any employee is welcome to participate. What kind of group might you participate with on an informal basis if you knew others shared your interest? (Check all that apply)

- |                                         |                                          |                                              |
|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Walking        | <input type="checkbox"/> In-line skating | <input type="checkbox"/> Volleyball          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stretching     | <input type="checkbox"/> Running         | <input type="checkbox"/> Weight loss         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Meditation     | <input type="checkbox"/> Biking          | <input type="checkbox"/> Resistance training |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nutrition      | <input type="checkbox"/> Hiking          | <input type="checkbox"/> Yoga                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cooking        | <input type="checkbox"/> Basketball      | <input type="checkbox"/> Jogging             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not interested | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____     |                                              |

16. Would you be willing to serve on the Wellness Committee? ☐ Yes ☐ No

17. If the Wellness Committee wanted to get out information about their activities, or news and tips about healthy lifestyles, what would be your preferred way to get that information (select one)

☐ a dedicated bulletin board

☐ weekly email tips

☐ a flyer distributed with paychecks

☐ email

☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

## References and Additional Information

1. WELCOA- Wellness Council of America. <http://wellness.org>
2. Infinite Wellness Solutions.  
<http://www.infinetwellnesssolutions.com/employee-wellness.html>
3. Worksite Wellness Programs.<http://worksite-wellness-programs.com/>
4. Employee Wellness Programs-Corporate Wellness Program.  
<http://www.wellnessproposals.com/>