

Workplace Wellness

WHY PROMOTE WELLNESS?

According to a 2015 study by the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Health Research and Education Trust, 81 percent of large employers and 49 percent of small employers offer wellness programs to their employees. These programs aim to improve employees' well-being by encouraging them to lose weight, stop smoking or make other positive lifestyle changes.



What is Workplace Wellness?

Workplace wellness refers to the education and activities that a worksite may sponsor in order to promote healthy lifestyles for their employees and their families. Examples of wellness initiatives include health education classes, subsidized use of fitness facilities and internal policies or programs that promote healthy behavior.

Do Wellness Programs Really Work?

When sponsoring a wellness program, the main hurdle to success is employee engagement. The benefits of wellness programs can only be realized if a significant number of your employees take part in your efforts. In order to gain buy-in, some businesses offer employees an incentive for participating or reaching certain health goals.

Why Workplace Wellness?

Wellness affects your company's bottom line in many ways—in particular, it can lower health care costs, increase productivity, decrease absenteeism and raise employee morale. Because employees spend many of their waking hours at work, the workplace is an ideal setting to address health and wellness issues. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) promotes the formation of workplace wellness programs because, according to one of its studies, employees in companies with “a strong culture of health” are three times more likely to actively strive to improve their health.

Control Health Insurance Costs

Health care costs can be a significant portion of a company's budget, so strategically targeting this expense can improve an employer's bottom line. Employees with more health risk factors, including being overweight, being a smoker and having diabetes, cost more to insure, and they pay more for health care than employees with fewer risk factors.

A wellness program can help employees with high risk factors make the lifestyle changes to improve their quality of life and reduce their health care costs, while also helping employees with fewer risk factors stay healthy.

Reduce Workers' Compensation and Disability Costs

Employees who make healthy changes and lower their health risk factors often have a reduced chance of a workplace injury, illness or disability. This, in turn, can save employers money, not just on insurance premiums and benefits paid out, but also on the costs of recruiting and training a new worker to replace an employee who is out of work for health reasons.

KISTLER  **TIFFANY**
BENEFITS

This article is not intended to be exhaustive nor should any discussion or opinions be construed as legal advice. Readers should contact legal counsel or an insurance professional for appropriate advice.

Are you a current client ready to start a wellness program in your office? Interested in learning more?
Contact Sue Bennett at sue@ktbenefits.com or visit ktbenefits.com/wellness.

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Increase Employee Productivity and Fewer Missed Days

Healthier employees mean fewer sick days, which is another benefit companies can achieve through wellness programs. Plus, employees' healthier behaviors may translate into better family choices, so employees may also miss less work caring for ill family members. In addition, healthier employees tend to be more productive since they are not coming to work ill or are worried about their health problems. Increased productivity and reduced absenteeism can yield significant cost savings.



Higher Morale and Improved Recruiting

A company that cares about its employees' health is often seen as a better place to work, and wellness programs can attract top talent in a competitive market. In addition, demonstrating a commitment to your employees' health can improve employee morale and strengthen retention. Below are some of the benefits employees can experience after joining a wellness program:

- » *Increased well-being, improved self-image and higher self-esteem*
- » *Improved coping skills with stress or other health factors*
- » *Reduced risk for developing chronic or life-threatening conditions*
- » *Increased motivation to improve health*
- » *Improved overall health*
- » *Lower costs for health care (fewer doctor visits, lower premiums, less need for expensive care, etc.)*
- » *Access to needed social support, as co-workers also strive toward healthier lifestyles*
- » *Improved job satisfaction*
- » *Safer and more productive work environment*

Employees who experience these positive changes and benefits will often feel more loyal to their company and be more grateful for the company's commitment to their health.



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