



IAPO Worksite Wellness Resource Guide



Dear Friend,

Many of us do not stop to consider how much our environment affects our health, or the role it plays in driving the obesity epidemic. However, the reality is that health begins in the places where we live, work, and play—places like our homes, our neighborhoods, and our workplaces. Many people attribute obesity and chronic disease to “lifestyle choices,” but substantial research provides solid evidence suggesting that where we live affects how we live. It is much more difficult for people to adopt healthy lifestyles if healthy options are not available. The good news is that this means we can foster good health by improving the places around us, by making sure that we have access to healthy and affordable food options, places for our families to run and play, and work environments that promote employee wellbeing.

Employers have the opportunity to be champions in addressing the obesity epidemic. On average, employees spend almost half of their waking hours working.¹ Considering all the time employees spend at the workplace, employers have a great opportunity to make a substantial impact on their employees’ health. Simply put, workplaces matter for building healthy communities.

In the same way that healthy workplaces matter for employees, healthy employees matter for business. Currently, the government picks up a large portion of the costs associated with obesity-related chronic disease, but employers shoulder a significant amount of the burden as well. Almost a quarter of health care spending by employers and employees is associated with ten modifiable risk factors, and obesity contributes the largest proportion of the excess cost.² Reduced productivity and absenteeism due to illness are also a huge cost to employers. If employers are truly concerned about excessive spending, they must take bold action—starting with their own workplaces. Investments in worksite wellness can help businesses improve their bottom line by reducing health care spending and creating more productive workers.

Likewise, healthcare organizations have a real opportunity to model healthy environments and practices. Hospitals are in the business of keeping people healthy, not just treating them when they are sick. Making their workplaces healthy goes to the heart of their mission and the consequences of inaction bear out in their institutions. The healthcare sector can lead by example.

Workplace wellness programs are a central strategy to prevent many of the common risk factors for cardiovascular disease and stroke including tobacco use, physical inactivity, obesity, hypertension, high cholesterol, and diabetes. Employers are finding that investing in employee health is not only the right thing to do, but that it also pays back. In 2011, the American Heart Association published a review of more than 200 studies and concluded that for every \$1 spent in wellness programs, companies could save an average of \$3.27

¹ “Table 1. Time Spent in Primary Activities (1) and Percent of the Civilian Population Engaging in Each Activity, Averages Per Day by Sex, 2011 Annual Averages.” Economic News Release. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011.

² Goetzel, R. Z., Pei, X., Tabrizi, M. J., Henke, R. M., Kowlessar, N., Nelson, C. F., & Metz, R. D. (2012). Ten modifiable health risk factors are linked to more than one-fifth of employer-employee health care spending. *Health affairs*, 31(11), 2474-2484.

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in medical costs and \$2.73 in absenteeism costs. Companies reap benefits not only from cost savings, but also from improved employee productivity and satisfaction.

Employee health is a worthwhile investment. Everyone benefits from worksite wellness programs: employers, employees, shareholders, and the broader community. When we are healthier as a society, we all benefit. We have a stronger workforce, a better economy, and higher quality of life. Worksite wellness programs boost employee morale and health, and are good for business, to boot.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elissa Bassler".

Elissa Bassler
CEO
Illinois Public Health Institute

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Heather E. Gavras".

Heather Gavras
Senior Director, Community Health
American Heart Association

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "LaMar Hasbrouck".

LaMar Hasbrouck, MD, MPH
Director
Illinois Department of Public Health

Introduction

The importance of addressing the environment that surrounds individual decision-making and promotes healthful behaviors is recognized as an important obesity prevention strategy.ⁱ Individuals are viewed within the larger context of community, family and society.ⁱⁱ Over 130 million Americans are employed across the United States and a significant part of their day is spent at work. Additionally, time spent at work has increased over the last two decades, making the workplace environment a significant target for obesity prevention efforts in particular.

The Illinois Alliance to Prevent Obesity supports the implementation of a comprehensive and evidence-based set of workplace wellness initiatives that incorporates an assessment of readiness to change, as well as modifications of the worksite environment that facilitate healthy behaviors. In particular, strategies focused on the implementation of policy, environmental and system level changes will lead to increased sustainability.

This resource guide includes policy and implementation information in areas such as physical activity, alternative scheduling, healthy vending, and breastfeeding support. Additionally, it contains information about assessing current worksite wellness and forming a committee.

I. Why care about worksite wellness?

Employee Health Promotion Programs: What is the Return on the Investment?

This issue brief demonstrates the impact of wellness programs on employee health and productivity and provides evidence that employers implementing such programs gain a substantial return on investment.

Key findings:

- Unhealthy lifestyle behaviors contribute to at least 25% of health care expenditures in the workplace
- The average return on investment (ROI) for workplace health promotion programs is \$3.14 for every \$1 spent invested. ROI estimates for individual companies in analysis ranged from \$1.49 to \$13.
- Citibank's wellness program achieved an ROI between \$4.56 and \$4.73 per \$1 invested.
- Sustainable, well-designed wellness programs with high employee buy-in are most likely to yield high returns on investment.
- Additional factors influencing outcomes include: longevity of the program, participation levels, size of company, employee demographics, and environmental factors.

Health Policy Brief: Workplace Wellness Programs

This brief describes how the Affordable Care Act will expand the ability of employers to reward workers who achieve health improvement goals, and reviews the current evidence base for employer benefits associated with worksite wellness programs.

Key findings:

- Average employer costs dropped about \$3.27 for every \$1 when health and wellness programs were present.
- Additionally, costs for days that employees were absent fell \$2.73.

Minnesota Toolkit (P. 3)

This fact sheet discusses how employers benefit financially from wellness programs.

Key Findings:

- Poor employee health leads to about a 51% decrease in productivity
- Loss of productivity due to health issues can cost employers about \$225.8 billion annually.
- One review of health promotion programs demonstrated an estimated 30% reduction in sick leave, health costs, and worker's compensation.

Worksite Wellness Programs for Cardiovascular Disease Prevention : A Policy Statement From the American Heart Association

An article from the American Heart Association that connects workplace wellness policies to cardiovascular health.

National Healthy Worksite Training Manual (CDCⁱⁱⁱ, P. 1-5)

A comprehensive guide to worksite wellness from the CDC that outlines the benefits of creating a healthy worksite.

II. Starting a Wellness Committee

[Saving Dollars and Making Sense: Committee Guide](#)

A comprehensive guide to creating a wellness committee at your worksite. Contains meeting plan and step-by-step implementation information.

[Kaiser Permanente Toolkit](#)

Set the stage for building a culture of health in your company.

Key Findings:

- Gain leadership endorsement- Having buy-in from key leaders facilitates policy change.
- Build a multi-level program- Your program should work on many levels (cultural, environmental, company, individual).
- Target the most important health issues
- Communicate to motivate- Generate excitement for your program by sending periodic reinforcements or updates. Reward and incentivize employee participation and success.

[Building a Healthier Chicago: Building a Healthier Workplace Guide \(Pgs. 11-15\)](#)

An in-depth resource to help Chicagoland employers to improve the health efforts and productivity of their employees.

[Jennifer's Tool and Die Worksite Wellness Policy](#)

Sample corporate wellness policy & wellness committee structure

[Carefully Evaluating Outcomes \(WELCOA\)](#)

Provides justification and benefits of program evaluation, in order to improve and increase sustainability.

[Using Outcomes-Based Incentives: American Heart Association](#)

Describes ways that the implementation of outcomes-based incentives can improve health, reduce costs, as well as protect employees from unaffordable coverage and discrimination.

[Workplace Travel Guide for Employers \(Section 2, P. 7-18\)](#)

III. Assessments/Tools

[Employee Interest Survey \(P. 46\)](#)

This survey from Kaiser Permanente will help you gauge employee interest in wellness programming.

[Checklist for Planning Employee Health Risk Appraisal Implementation](#)

This checklist helps employers prepare to conduct a health risk appraisal (HRA) for employees.

[Health Goal Setting Worksheet \(Kaiser Permanente\)](#)

This worksheet serves as a template for setting workplace health goals.

[Eating Well \(P. 7\)](#)

This tool from Kaiser Permanente will help you plan, implement, and evaluate programs to encourage healthy eating among employees.

[Moving More \(P. 16\)](#)

This assessment tool from Kaiser Permanente will help you plan, implement, and evaluate programs to encourage physical activity among employees.

[Rewards and Incentives \(P. 51\)](#)

Ideas from Kaiser Permanente to get your employees excited about workplace wellness.

IV. Healthy Eating

[Model Beverage and Food Vending Machine Standards \(NANA\)](#)

The National Alliance for Nutrition & Activity developed vending standards to provide a model for municipal, state, and federal government leased or operated vending machines or vending machines on public property. The standards also could be used by hospitals, private workplaces, and others to support the health of their employees or visitors.

[Model Policy for Implementing Beverage & Food Vending Machine Standards \(NANA\)](#)

The National Alliance for Nutrition & Activity developed a model policy to implement the model beverage and food vending machine standards referenced above.

[Network for a Healthy California \(P. 3\)](#)

Outlines healthy vending standards for snacks and drinks, lists suggestions for healthy snacks

[Minnesota Toolkit \(Appendix A, P. 13\)](#)

Suggested action steps for bringing healthy options to worksite vending and dining.

[Chicago Park District Case Study](#)

A report on the Chicago Park District's experience implementing strong vending machine nutrition standards, intended to inform those interested in pursuing healthier snack vending initiatives.

[Colorado Physical Activity and Nutrition Program Worksite Task Force: Healthful Eating \(Section 3\)](#)

Action steps to encourage healthy food and beverage choices.

[California Worksite Program: Healthy Dining Menu Guidelines](#)

Recommendations to encourage good choices at your worksite cafeteria.

[WELCOA Vendor Checklist](#)

Provides a survey for companies to evaluate potential healthy vendors based on cost, product

quality, and technological capability, among other measures.

[North Carolina Sample Healthy Food Policy](#)

A sample document that outlines the reasons, as well as policies for creating a culture of wellness in the workplace.

[North Carolina Healthy Meeting Guide](#)

Offers guidelines and tips for providing healthy food and beverage options at meetings. Also, provides healthy substitutions and sample menus.

[Alabama Healthy Vending Machine Project](#)

Fact sheet that describes the need and the reasons for improving guidelines for snacks in state agency vending machines.

[Alabama Healthy Vending Policy](#)

Policy created by the Alabama Department of Public health to regulate vending machines in state facilities.

[Alabama Good Choice Vending Guidelines](#)

A practical guide to promotion, placement, and pricing of the Alabama Healthy Vending Machine Policy. Also includes an approved snack list and additional resources.

[Nutrition Standards for Healthy Food and Beverage Procurement \(AHA\)](#)

The American Heart Association's policies and nutrition standards for creating healthy options in the workplace.

[Under Pressure: Strategies for Sodium Reduction in Worksites](#)

Explains the importance of limiting sodium in the workplace, as well as ways to establish and maintain relevant programs.

V. Active Transport/ Physical Activity

[Workplace Travel Guide for Employers \(Section 4, P. 27-36\)](#)

Outlines various elements of a successful active workplace travel plan such as walking and cycling.

[An Employer Guide to Bicycle Commuting](#)

This Baltimore-based employer guide demonstrates the economic, environmental, and health benefits of bicycle commuting and offers ideas for creating a bike-friendly work environment.

[A Guide to Establishing Worksite Walking Clubs](#)

A step by step guide to implementing a successful walking club at your workplace.

[A Guide to Improving Worksite Stairwells](#)

A very simple, inexpensive way to encourage employees to be active at work.

VI. Alternative Scheduling

[Does Flex Time Lead to Better Health?](#)

This New York Times article summarizes evidence demonstrating that job flexibility improves employee health habits.

[Boomer Consulting Network Policy](#)

A very useful template that defines various areas and ways to keep track of the flextime policy

[Woman's Work Flex Time Policy](#)

Provides a concise look at the need, as well as the structure for a successful flex scheduling policy

VII. Breastfeeding

[Breastfeeding is Smart Business Brochure](#)

Brief information on benefits for mothers, families, and businesses

[Policy for Supporting Breast-Feeding Employees](#)

Describes how mother-friendly workplaces benefit employers and outlines the necessary components of a workplace breastfeeding support program

[Investing in Workplace Breastfeeding Programs and Policies](#)

Comprehensive guide to creating company breastfeeding support programs and policies

[Breastfeeding Support at the Workplace: Best Practices to Promote Health and Productivity](#)

Demonstrates employer benefits and cost savings from a worksite breastfeeding support policy

[Maine Worksite Lactation Support Information](#)

Quick tips on providing lactation support in the workplace

VIII. Real-world Employer Success Stories

[Local Case Study: Vanguard Health Chicago](#)

The Vanguard Chicago Market institutes a healthy beverage campaign, eliminating all sugar-loaded drinks in all of the Chicago based hospitals, healthcare sites, and market office in July, 2012.

ⁱEriksen M., Lessons learned from public health efforts and their relevance to preventing childhood obesity [appendix D]; Inc Koplan J, Liverman CT, Kraak VI, eds. Preventing Childhood Obesity: Health in the Balance. Washington, DC: National Academies Press; 2005:343-376

ⁱⁱⁱⁱPearson TA, Bazzarre TL, Daniels SR, Fair JM, Fortmann SP, Franklin BA, Goldstein LB, Hong Y, Mensah GA, Sallis JF, Smith S, Stone NJ, Taubert KA. American Heart Association guide for improving cardiovascular health in the community. Circulation. 2003; 107:645

ⁱⁱⁱⁱⁱA special thanks to the CDC for their consultation on this document.