



Section One

## **BEFORE YOU START**



## Before You Start

### IS IT TIME FOR WORKSITE WELLNESS?

Many business leaders may say that they value the health of their employees and think that worksite wellness is a great idea. However, when faced with the decision to implement a wellness program, they often respond, "It's not a company priority at this time."

If you feel the same way, consider the brief questionnaire below.

Our company wants:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Healthier employees.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To improve employee productivity and reduce absenteeism.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To reduce the cost of health benefits/health care.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To attract and retain employees.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To be a positive force for improving community health.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To be competitive with other businesses.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you responded "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" to any of the statements above, then worksite wellness is a priority for your company. The health of your employees is strongly tied to the success of your company. No matter what size, industry, or geographic area, businesses whose employees are healthier experience increased productivity and reduced health care costs, and are better able to compete in the marketplace.

For more information on the prevalence of diseases and risk factors in Georgia, go to:  
<http://health.state.ga.us/publications/reports.asp>



## Before You Start

### GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH WORKSITE HEALTH INITIATIVE

#### Why Worksite Wellness Programming

The prevalence of adult obesity in Georgia is at an all-time high. Nearly 28.7% of Georgia adults are obese, and 34.9 % overweight (BRFSS, 2011). These estimates have nearly doubled over the past 25 years and continue to rise. This burden affects all individuals, regardless of age, race, gender, income, or education level. Physical activity levels among Georgia adults is also low, only 20.7% of adults meet both the aerobic and muscular stretching components of federal physical activity recommendations. Furthermore, only 28% of Georgia adults meet recommendations for fruit and vegetable consumption (BRFSS, 2011).

The obesity epidemic in the state of Georgia is due to a variety of factors including: increased consumption of energy-dense foods, decreased fruit and vegetable consumption, decreased physical activity, and increase sedentary behavior. These factors are all present when examining adult worksites. The increase reliance on unhealthy vending machine options and the loss of cafeterias in many worksites due to tough economic times, the rise in health insurance, and the general increase in sedentary jobs have played a contributing role (Escoffery, Kegler, Alcantara, Wilson, & Glanz, 2011). Data demonstrates that employees spend an average of 50 hours a week at work. Employees also eat about one-third of their meals during the workday. Georgia Department of Public Health (GDPH) interventions aimed at increasing healthy behaviors at the workplace have had positive results and have identified strategies that could be useful for new worksite health initiatives. Without workplace health initiatives and interventions, there will be little progress in obtaining a healthier workforce and decreasing the prevalence of obesity in the state of Georgia.

#### Program Design

The Georgia Department of Public Health's worksite wellness program is designed to enrich GDPH's employee's physical, mental, emotional, occupational, and spiritual wellbeing. A major goal of the program is to make the work environment more supportive of positive health behaviors for its employees and thereby reduce their risk of developing chronic diseases. To assist employees in adopting healthier behaviors- including healthy eating, physical activity, and tobacco cessation. The GDPH worksite wellness program primarily addresses modifiable chronic disease risk factors such as physical activity, nutrition, blood pressure, weight, and diabetes management.



## Before You Start



### History “Health Matters/DHR on the MOVE”

“Health Matters/DHR on the MOVE”, a worksite wellness initiative for approximately 2,500 employees working within the Georgia Department of Human Resources, was initiated in 2002. Health Matters began with the development of a pilot, Health Matters Challenge, in June of 2002 for employees in the Division of Public Health. The goal of the 2-day challenge was to assist employees in identifying and implementing positive health changes. Employees were able to test their level of personal fitness, participate in exercise classes, obtain a bone density screening, and be counseled individually about completing the challenge. The Challenge was repeated in October 2002, June 2003, and July 2004. Baseline data on all the assessments (such as Body Mass Index, fitness tests, and bone density) were collected on employees who participated in the launch of the Challenge and for subsequent years. In addition, an informal worksite wellness committee was formed. The committee was comprised of staff from the Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Program (formerly Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Branch), Maternal and Child Health (formerly Family Health Branch), and with leadership from the HPDPP’s Cardiovascular Health Worksite Wellness Coordinator.

In order to enhance the nutrition and physical activity component of Health Matters, the Health Matters worksite wellness committee recognized the need to offer regular activities related to healthy eating and physical activity, in addition to the Health Matters Challenge, in order to foster sustained behavior change among employees. The committee began planning for the pilot by conducting a needs assessment during the July 2004 Health Matters Challenge and conducted an additional survey in December of 2004. The results of the surveys were analyzed and formed the basis of the Health Matters six-week pilot project, DHR on the Move.

The DHR on the Move pilot was launched in January 2005. The goal of the project was to improve employee wellness and to create a worksite environment that promoted healthful eating and physical activity. The objectives of the pilot were to increase levels of physical activity, improve healthy eating habits (such as increase fruit and vegetable consumption), and increase the number of environmental supports for healthy eating and physical activity within the 2 Peachtree Street building location. The pilot project directly targeted the three hundred and fifteen (315) employees working in select branches within the Division of Public Health, specifically the Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC), Maternal and Child Health, Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, and Epidemiology. These program areas were chosen specifically because the employees work in the area of health or have programs that address nutrition and physical activity, thus starting with an audience that is already aware of the importance of healthy eating and being physically active for overall health.



## Before You Start

Health Matters/DHR on the Move		
Strategy	Barrier (How does the strategy link to barriers identified)	Incentive (How does the strategy link to the incentives identified)
<b>Walking Groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of shower and change facilities: employees who participate may not need to change or use shower facilities compared to participating in an aerobics class.</li> <li>• Buddy system will be incorporated to provide social support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedometers will be provided as incentives to participate (signing up for DHR on the Move) and track steps</li> <li>• DHR on the Move challenges between branches</li> <li>• Management to provide time off of work.</li> </ul>
<b>Weekly Lunch and Learns on Nutrition and Physical Activity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classes will incorporate</li> </ul>	concepts of goal setting, address the factors such as eating on a healthy budget, cost of healthy choices, how to be physically active on your break and lunch hour, and self-efficacy. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recipes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coupons for fruits and vegetables</li> <li>• Measuring Cups</li> <li>• Other promotional items</li> </ul>
<b>Worksite Environment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthy Vending Choices</li> <li>• Shower facilities</li> <li>• Promote on-site R&amp;R produce store</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthy choices that are low-cost will be offered in vending machines</li> <li>• Encourage management support through team meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing healthy choices will be labeled in vending machines</li> <li>• Promote healthy choices offer at R&amp;R produce stand</li> </ul>
<b>On-site Exercise Classes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distributing calendar of events in building and neighboring facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage management support of these classes through team meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calendar of exercise classes currently provided by employees</li> </ul>
<b>Marketing Health Messages</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DHR on the Move website</li> <li>• Weekly emails</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotes availability of Lunch and Learns, exercise facilities as well as incentives to participate.</li> </ul>

## Before You Start



The outcomes achieved by the DHR “Health Matters/DHR on the Move” Worksite Wellness Initiative included:

- *Administering Fit-checks to employees to develop baseline health data for program development and comparison*
- *Offering periodic group exercise classes for employees: such as yoga, tai chi, and kickboxing as well as relaxation sessions for stress management*
- *Providing pedometers, stretch bands, donated incentive items, and resource materials that may be applied at the worksite and daily lifestyle scenarios.*
- *Establishing several environmental changes and supports such as a lactation room, healthier eating options in vending machines, point of decision prompts for stairwell usage, and ongoing program support of free exercise classes and onsite fruit and vegetable farmer’s market.*
- *Establishing active walking groups with team leaders on each participating floor.*

### Summary

“Health Matters/DHR on the Move” primarily targeted employees within the 2 Peachtree building. In August of 2012, the Georgia Department of Public Health, Office of the Chief of Staff, hired a full-time worksite wellness coordinator to focus on Public Health staff located at 2 Peachtree Street, Pryor Street, and the PH labs. Staff within Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (HPDP) supported this effort by creating a five year worksite wellness plan for the Commissioner that focused on evidence-based interventions recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This plan included promoting stair-well use, creating physical activity and tobacco free campus policies, increasing the amount of healthy food options, and opening an on-site fitness center. Susanne Koch currently serves as the worksite wellness coordinator for DPH. The HPDP worksite wellness coordinator has always supported the efforts of the DPH worksite wellness coordinator, working collaboratively to increase the number of healthy employees.





## Before You Start

### WHY INVEST IN WORKSITE WELLNESS?

The financial demands of running a business are tremendous. Not only do employers have to keep profitability in mind, they must also make the best use of staff time – which is often challenging, at best!

So, why is it important to invest in worksite wellness? Take a look at these startling facts:

- *Five major chronic diseases cause more than two-thirds of deaths in the United States: heart disease, cancer, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and diabetes.*
- *About 75% of health care costs each year are attributable to chronic preventable diseases. More than 125 million Americans are living with these chronic diseases and 1 in 10 experiences major limitations in activity as a result.*
- *Chronic diseases account for \$3 of every \$4 spent on healthcare. That's nearly \$7,900 for every American with a chronic disease.<sup>2</sup>*

As the alarm bell sounds on the national stage, the trend is equally – and dangerously – urgent at home. In 2009 Georgia personal health care spending totaled \$5,467 per capita.<sup>3</sup> Employers are not exempt from this trend, as evidenced by the skyrocketing employee benefit costs that directly impact employers' bottom lines. The majority of these health care costs are borne by the employer in the form of employer contributions to insurance premiums – which continue to rise with no apparent end in sight. As a result, many employers are being forced to reduce health benefits coverage or eliminate it altogether.

Yet, while loss of employer sponsorship is certainly a factor, a significant portion of the health benefits decline rests directly on the shoulders of employee behaviors and lifestyle choices. Nearly \$250 billion is spent each year on health care costs related to lifestyle choices, including unhealthy eating habits, tobacco use, and sedentary lifestyles.<sup>4</sup> In Georgia, only 2 in 5 adults are regularly physically active. Activity levels have been on the decline since 1996 – amounting to 5,543 deaths, 29,844 hospitalizations, and \$477 million in hospital charges.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, 1 in 4 Georgians uses tobacco, which leads to more than 11,000 deaths per year and more than 190,000 years of life lost prematurely. Further, tobacco users utilize health care 50% more than non-tobacco users, amounting to \$1.8 billion in direct medical costs every year for tobacco-related illness.<sup>6</sup>





## Before You Start

Along with actual health care costs, on-the-job productivity losses account for a significant portion of the total dollars attributable to common chronic health conditions among employees. Absenteeism (i.e. employees' inability to work due to illness) poses a substantial burden for employers. A national study of 2,000 workers aged 25 to 54 showed that those with an impairment resulting from a chronic disease reported an average of 6.7 workdays lost per month.<sup>7</sup>

An even more costly, but often overlooked, aspect of employee illness is presenteeism – which refers to the lost productivity that occurs when employees come to work but perform poorly due to illness – and accounts for an estimated \$180 billion a year.<sup>8</sup>



The good news is that worksite wellness programs can help your organization get on the right track to reversing these trends, creating a win-win outcome for your employees and your company. In fact, employers who conduct wellness programs have documented results like these:<sup>9</sup>

- *Average 28% reduction in sick leave absenteeism*
- *Average 26% reduction in health costs*
- *Average 30% reduction in workers' compensation and disability management claims costs*
- *Average \$5.93-to-\$1 savings-to-cost ratio*

The evidence is abundant – and the need for programs that encourage employee lifestyle change has never been greater. Whether your goal is to keep all your employees healthy or to identify and assist those who have or are at risk for developing chronic preventable diseases, a worksite wellness program is worth the investment.

Starting today, you can begin taking steps to reduce the burden of chronic diseases among your employees – and the financial burden on your company. The *Work Healthy Georgia* toolkit can provide the answers you've been looking for!





## Before You Start

### WORKSITE WELLNESS PROGRAM COSTS AND BENEFITS

The costs of an effective worksite wellness program are flexible, and they vary depending on the type of program, size and scale, and the resources available. Choosing the level of investment that's right for your company is entirely up to you. Comprehensive wellness programs are, of course, more expensive. However, the Wellness Council of America estimates a return on investment of \$300 to \$450 for every \$100 to \$150 spent per employee, making the comprehensive approach a smart investment. In starting a wellness program, you should consider the following program component costs:

#### Wellness Program Costs

- 1. Personnel** - The initial costs of starting a worksite wellness program include staff time spent planning and organizing the program. Wellness program staff may include an external contractor, a full- or part-time employee wellness coordinator, or regular staff assigned to the wellness committee.
- 2. Infrastructure** - The dollar amount spent to support your worksite wellness program will depend on how comprehensive and extensive your program will be, as well as the focus and objectives of your program. Costs may include creating safe walking trails or installing bike racks; developing and printing newsletters; providing medical health risk assessments for all employees; or telephonic wellness coaching.
- 3. Activities** - As with your program infrastructure, activity costs will depend on the requirements necessary to carry out the activity (e.g. lunch-and-learns, walking programs, etc.) These may include costs for informational flyers, pedometers, and incentives for participants.

The benefits of a worksite wellness program extend far beyond the direct gains in health cost savings. Dividends that an employer will reap include a healthier and more productive staff, increased employee morale, and improved company culture. Even more important, you will enjoy the satisfaction of knowing that you've made a significant and lasting contribution toward the health of the people in your company.

#### Wellness Program Benefits

- Return on investment
- Increased employee productivity
- Reduced health benefits costs and medical claims
- Reduced disability claims
- Reduced workers compensation claims
- Increased employee morale
- Decreased employee turnover
- Employee retention and recruitment



## Before You Start

### CHOOSING THE PROGRAM THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU

Choosing the most appropriate worksite wellness program for your company depends on a number of factors, including management's expectations for the wellness program, available resources, and employee needs and interests. Most worksite wellness programs fall into one of three categories:

- *Health promotion programs for all employees*
- *Disease management programs for high-risk employees*
- *Population health management programs*

#### Health Promotion Programs

A health promotion program addresses disease prevention among all employees, regardless of risk level, current health status, or any other stratification. These programs are designed to help move employees toward a healthier lifestyle by providing health information and opportunities to engage in healthy behaviors. This type of program is what has been traditionally thought of as a "wellness program". It is activity-based and makes use of a wealth of health education materials. As part of their health promotion efforts, many companies offer fitness and nutrition classes, screenings, health fairs, and lunch-and-learn events. Some worksites also distribute or display health education materials and/or promote health observances like Heart Health Month or World Asthma Day.

#### Disease Management Programs

Unlike health promotion programs, which target all employees, disease management programs are designed to identify high-risk employees and provide them with specific interventions aimed at reducing their risks for specific diseases and conditions. These programs, by definition, focus exclusively on those employees who have developed a disease or its precursor, or are at risk for doing so. Disease management programs help individuals reduce their risk of developing a disease or a related condition by teaching them to monitor and manage their illnesses (self management), or by placing their care under the management of a team of health care providers (case management). Examples of disease management programs are the Diabetes at Work program and the Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program. The table below compares the two types of workplace wellness programs:

Focus	ROI*	Target Audience	Other Notes
<b>Health promotion:</b> behavior changes that prevent health issues.	<b>\$3 - 6 return on investment (ROI) within 2-3 years</b>	<b>All employees</b>	<b>Greater appeal as a recruiting and retention tool.</b>
<b>Disease management:</b> monitor and treat specific diseases.	<b>\$7 - 10 ROI within 1 year.</b>	<b>An estimated 20% of employees, the high risk group, that utilize 80% of health care costs</b>	<b>ROI is lower over time than a prevention approach.</b>

\*Return on Investment according to the National Business Group on Health.<sup>10</sup>



## Before You Start

### Population Health Management Programs

Like health promotion programs, the population health management approach reaches out to employees throughout the organization, not just those who have a chronic disease or who are at risk for developing one. This approach addresses the entire continuum of employee health risk, from no or low risk through onset of disease, and ensures that no one moves along the continuum toward high risk without appropriate intervention.<sup>11</sup> When medical intervention is required, treatment levels may include: 1) disease management, 2) careful monitoring of the individual's health status and adherence to a treatment regimen, 3) modification of treatment as needed, and 4) monitoring of the individual's efforts to make lifestyle and behavior changes. The only variations across risk levels are the amount of care and intensity of effort expended to ensure that individuals are monitored for symptoms and motivated to begin lifestyle modifications and behavior change programs.

Utilizing this approach requires implementing inter-linked prevention and risk reduction strategies that have been proven to be effective, science-based, and grounded in best practices of medicine and health promotion. This approach also incorporates changes within the organizational culture to make health and wellness a priority, taking steps to make healthy choices available, and providing resources and incentives to support employees in their efforts to be, and remain, healthy.

A variety of incentives may be required to increase participation in these more intensive efforts. Yet, all employees, regardless of risk level, can reap the benefits of routine clinical preventive services, including screenings, early identification of diseases, appropriate immunizations, and referral to the best treatment sources.

While the population health management approach is certainly the “gold standard,” it is unrealistic to think that most employers will have the time and resources to adopt this strategy at the outset of their efforts. Thus, the *Work Healthy Georgia* toolkit focuses on helping you get started with the most commonly adopted strategies:

- *Health promotion programs for all employees*
- *Disease management programs for high-risk employees*







## Before You Start

### PREPARING FOR YOUR WORKSITE WELLNESS PROGRAM

#### Worksite Wellness Committee

Ultimately, the success of your worksite wellness program will depend on reaching every employee in every position in your company. So it's important to establish a broad-based wellness committee or task force to plan, organize, and implement the worksite wellness program. This participatory approach is similar to quality improvement programs that emphasize the need for employees to be detail- and results-oriented and to provide feedback to supervisors and co-workers.

The beauty of a broad-based worksite wellness committee is that members can pull representatives from throughout the organization to look at health issues from different perspectives and encourage various employee groups to work together to improve the work environment and the organizational culture so that it supports health and wellness at every level. Forming such a committee will enable you to overcome resource limitations, while crafting interventions that are effective across the entire worksite.

Another advantage of the wellness committee approach is that involving employees from all segments of the organization creates buy-in – drawing in multiple perspectives to identify aspects of the worksite needing change, to mobilize resources, and implement effective solutions.

#### Wellness Committee First Steps

**Step 1: Gain management leadership support.** Leadership involvement and commitment to worksite wellness and the process of change is critical to the success of the program. Provision of incentives to encourage employee participation, as well as changes in company policy, investments in environmental changes or infrastructure, and modifications in health benefits programs require leadership involvement.

**Step 2: Identify a coordinator.** This person will be responsible for organizing meetings and keeping the process moving forward. This person should be organized, motivating, and committed to the process.

**Step 3: Recruit employees.** Pull together employees who can work together across all the levels and sectors of the organization.



## Before You Start

### Management Support

It is essential to recognize the role of managers in effective worksite wellness programs. Though their attitudes may vary from “wellness champion” to active opposition, their support for and participation in the program is vital – they can make or break your program!

Perhaps you’re reading this *Work Healthy Georgia* toolkit because your organization’s leaders have understood and endorsed the need for a worksite wellness program. If so, congratulations! You’re already well on your way. But if garnering management support is your next step, consider presenting the materials in the “Why Invest in Worksite Wellness” section of this toolkit, and gain their approval to survey employees for more specific interests and needs. Be prepared to address potential concerns and present the benefits, both for employees and the company as a whole, of implementing a wellness program.





## Before You Start

### SECTION ONE RESOURCES

Wellness Council of America. Healthy, Wealthy, Wise. Available at:

[http://welcoa.org/freeresources/pdf/healthy\\_wealthy\\_wise.zip](http://welcoa.org/freeresources/pdf/healthy_wealthy_wise.zip)

Hunnicut, D. (2007). Carefully Crafting Your Organization's Wellness Plan. WELCOA's Absolute Advantage Magazine, 6(7), 4-11. Available at:

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Lynch WB. What is a Healthy Employee Worth? WELCOA's Absolute Advantage Magazine, 2002, 16-19. Available at: [http://welcoa.org/freeresources/pdf/healthy\\_employee\\_2.pdf](http://welcoa.org/freeresources/pdf/healthy_employee_2.pdf)

Hunnicut, D. (2007). 10 Secrets of Successful Worksite Wellness Teams. WELCOA's Absolute Advantage Magazine, 6(3), 6-13. Wellness Council of American. Available at:

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