

Starting a Wellness Committee at Your Workplace



Benefits of a Wellness Program

A workplace wellness program is intended to support your employees' wellbeing – in all its dimensions (physical, emotional, financial, social, career, and community) – regardless of their current health status.

A well-designed wellness program can...

- Improve employee wellbeing
- Reduce absenteeism
- Reduce presenteeism
- Improve productivity and engagement
- improve employee morale



Why You Need a Wellness Committee

A successful wellness committee is the vehicle to promote and execute the wellness-related functions throughout the company. A wellness team gives the program credibility and energy, as well as provides stability, lightens the work load, and broadens your reach. Additionally, a wellness committee gives employees ownership of your wellness program and shared responsibility for its success.

- A committee brings together people with different talents and backgrounds
- A dedicated group of people can more effectively implement wellness programs than just one person can
- A wellness committee assures the sustainability of your program

What a Wellness Committee Does

The primary functions of a wellness committee include:

- Evaluating the current programs, services, data, outcomes, and policies available at your workplace
- Assessing employee needs and preferences
- Developing and periodically updating a wellness program operating plan, including a vision statement, goals, and objectives
- Implementing, monitoring, and evaluating wellness program activities
- Building a resource list for employees to access programs and information
- Communicating effectively across the company

**Your Univera
Healthcare Wellbeing
Engagement
Consultant can guide
you throughout
this process.**

Step 1: What You Need to Get Started

Senior leadership support. Having support from senior leadership is critical to the success of your wellness program. Identify a senior leader who will be your wellness champion and is able to:

- Allocate budget and resources for the wellness program
- Advocate for the wellness program to upper management
- Change or implement policies and procedures to create a healthier work environment
- Participate in wellness programs

A capable chairperson. Identify a committee chairperson who can:

- Communicate effectively with all employees at all levels within the organization
- Define priorities for the wellness program
- Work well with a variety of personalities
- Establish an agenda and stay on task
- Meet goals and deadlines
- Motivate others
- Demonstrate an understanding of workplace wellness concepts

Step 2: Recruiting Committee Members

Identify people from different departments and different levels within your organization to serve on the wellness committee. Strive for a diverse committee that represents all of your employees, from senior leadership to line workers. Committee members do not need to be the healthiest people in your company; they need to be respected by co-workers, able to work as part of a team, able to communicate effectively, and willing to participate.

Try to get representation from a variety of departments within your organization. For example, invite someone from:

- Human Resources
- Marketing
- Information Technology
- Facilities
- Food Service
- Occupational Health
- Finance
- Management
- Manufacturing
- Administration

Committees can be any size. Larger companies are more likely to have larger committees. Aim for 8-12 members to start.





In addition to a committee chair person, other roles you may consider defining are:

Vice Chair

- Assists chair in all their duties

Secretary

- Takes minutes at meetings
- Types up and distributes minutes within a week after each meeting

Treasurer

- Manages the wellness program budget

Webmaster

- Keeps the wellness program's website up to date

Data Master

- Keeps statistics for wellness programs, such as participation numbers, satisfaction, changes in behavior, success stories, and outcomes

Step 3: Clearly Define Roles and Expectations

Clearly defined roles and expectations will help your committee function smoothly. In addition to the skills listed in Step 1, the chairperson's role is to:

- Schedule and facilitate regular monthly meetings
- Develop and distribute agendas for meetings
- Act as liaison between the wellness committee and the senior leader wellness champion
- Oversee planning and execution of wellness programs and activities
- Ensure everyone on the committee is active and engaged

All committee members, regardless of role, are expected to:

- Attend most of the meetings
- Embrace the mission and vision of the wellness program
- Serve the full term established for committee members (typically 1-2 years)
- Participate in the annual continuing education program for the wellness committee
- Lead/co-lead at least one program or activity per year
- Actively promote all wellness programs and activities to co-workers
- Have supervisor's approval to participate on the wellness committee, which includes attending meetings, and planning, promoting, and participating in wellness program activities during the work day

Some companies create a Wellness Committee Member Agreement, to be signed by the member and his/her supervisor. This document outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Wellness Committee and expectations of members. See Sample "Wellness Committee Member Agreement" in the appendix.

Once you have your committee chairperson and members, schedule your first meeting!

Step 4: Lay the groundwork

While it will be tempting to start scheduling wellness activities right away, it is very important to build a strong foundation first. Your first wellness committee meeting covers some basic groundwork so everyone understands their role.

- Make sure everyone knows each other! Do a fun ice breaker.
- Create a directory of committee members and distribute it to all members.
- Select a note taker (if not already assigned).
- Review roles and expectations of committee members. If you are asking committee members to read and sign the member agreement, review it and make sure everyone talks with their supervisor about participating on the wellness committee.
- Establish a regular meeting schedule and frequency. Monthly is recommended. The chair or appointee should send meeting invitations for the whole year.
- Come up with a name and/or tagline for your wellness program. Ask your marketing department to create a logo for you.
- Develop mission and vision statements for your wellness program. See "Creating Mission and Vision Statements" in the appendix.



Step 5: Collect and Review Data

Don't skip this step! Collecting and reviewing relevant data will help you identify what topics and issues to address with your programming. The data also serves as a baseline so you can gauge the effectiveness of your program.

Determine what data you have and what you need to collect. Potential data sources include:

- Workplace Health Assessment
- Health Risk Assessment
- Biometric screening results
- Employee interest survey
- Employee engagement survey
- Health insurance claims data
- Demographics of workforce (age, sex, education)
- Absenteeism (sick days, worker's compensation, short and long term disability)

Step 6: Craft an Operating Plan

Once you have collected and reviewed your data, you need to create an operating plan for your program. The operating plan is the central document that serves as a road map for your program and what it will accomplish.

Do not underestimate the importance of an operating plan – it describes what your wellness program will accomplish and includes what, why, where, when, and who. Be patient. This step takes time.

The operating plan should include these elements:

- 1. The vision and mission statements for your wellness program.** You wrote this in Step 4.
- 2. Specific goals with measurable objectives.** These goals and objectives are based on the data you collected and reviewed in step 5. They serve as your compass and ensure you are moving in the right direction. Make sure they are SMART goals.
- 3. Timelines for implementation.** Establishing a calendar of events and timeline for completion helps keep your program on track and holds people accountable.
- 4. Roles and responsibilities for each objective.** Take advantage of people's individual strengths and talents when assigning roles (refer back to step 3).
- 5. An itemized budget.** This ensures you have the resources needed to carry out the plan. Having a budget is optimal; if resources are limited, however, there are ways to be creative. Look for free resources and services in your community.
- 6. Marketing strategies to promote your plan.** Use multiple methods of communication, including printed, oral, and electronic. Effectively communicating is the determining factor between a successful program and an ineffective program. See "Communication Strategies for Your Wellness Program" in the appendix.
- 7. An evaluation plan to measure your goals and objectives.** Measures should include participation, participant satisfaction, changes in knowledge, attitudes and behavior, and ultimately changes in employee engagement, work environment and culture. Before you start your program, develop an evaluation plan that aligns with your objectives and goals, and identifies the outcomes you will measure.

Once your operating plan is finalized, refer to it regularly to keep your program on track. Share it with senior leaders and wellness committee members. Review and update the operating plan yearly.

What is a SMART goal?

Specific: Each goal should clearly define what, why, where, when, who.

Measurable: Each goal should have clear criteria for measuring progress towards completion.

Agreed upon: The stakeholders agree on the content and definition of each goal.

Realistic: Each goal is within the resources, knowledge and time available.

Time-bound: Each goal has a timeframe for completion.



Step 7: Build on the Foundation

Once you have built the foundation for your wellness program, use ongoing meetings to continue planning and evaluating your programs and activities. Collect new data every year to track your program's effectiveness. Use multiple communication methods to keep promoting your program. Keep it fresh. What worked in the first year of your program may not work as well in the third year.

Tips for a Lasting Committee:

- Have someone take notes at every meeting and distribute minutes afterward
- Ensure committee members participate in continuing education each year
- Re-evaluate your program and update your operating plan annually
- As new members come on board, share the operating plan with them
- **Have fun!**

Appendices

Sample Wellness Committee Member Agreement

Creating Mission and Vision Statements

Communication Strategies for Your Wellness Program

10 Secrets of Successful Workplace Wellness Teams

WELCOA's 7 Benchmarks

Additional Resources

[CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)

[UniveraHealthcare.com](https://www.univerahealthcare.com)

[Healthypeople.gov](https://www.healthypeople.gov)

[Nationalwellness.org](https://www.nationalwellness.org)

[Welcoa.org](https://www.welcoa.org)

Appendix 1: Sample Wellness Committee Member Agreement



To adapt this for your wellness committee:

1. Ask your Wellbeing Engagement Consultant for the electronic version
2. Add your company logo
3. Replace "Company ABC" with your company's name
4. Edit the document as needed to adapt it for your wellness committee

Company ABC Employee Wellness Committee – Member Agreement

Purpose of Wellness Committee:

A successful wellness team helps Company ABC build a sustainable wellness program by leveraging diverse perspectives to ensure the wellness program meets the needs of and is communicated to all employees. The committee is expected to:

- Evaluate the current programs, services and policies that are available at your workplace
- Assess employee needs and preferences
- Develop a wellness program operating plan, including a vision statement, goals, and objectives
- Assist in implementing, monitoring, and evaluating wellness program activities

Expectations of Committee Members:

The wellness committee will meet monthly. To be a member of the wellness committee, you are expected to:

- Embrace the mission and vision of the wellness program
- Serve a term of 2 years
- Attend at least 10 out of 12 committee meetings per year
- Participate in the annual continuing education program for the wellness committee
- Lead/co-lead at least one program/activity per year
- Actively promote all wellness programs and activities to co-workers
- Have your supervisor's approval to participate on the wellness committee and in the planning, promotion of, and participation in wellness committee activities and programs during the work day

Please sign this document to indicate that you agree to the expectations outlined above. Also ask your supervisor to review the expectations and sign below to indicate his/her approval.

Print Name

Supervisor's Name

Signature

Signature

Department

Department

Date

Date

Appendix 2: Creating Mission and Vision Statements

Developing mission and vision statements

Developing mission and vision statements is critical to the success of your wellness program. They are the glue that holds the program together and explains why you are starting a wellness program and what you want to accomplish.

The difference between a vision statement and mission statement

Think of the words 'visionary' and 'missionary.' A visionary is someone who imagines possible futures. A missionary is someone who does work under the guidance of a larger objective. Similarly, the vision statement describes how the world will be different because of the existence of the program, while the mission statement provides the 'vehicle' for the vision; it describes the means that will be used to achieve the desired future.

When crafting these statements for your organization, consider the following questions:

1. What is the future you want to create for this community? *This is your vision.*
2. What do we do? For whom do we do it? What is the impact? *This is your mission.*

Another way of saying it: your mission is what you do best every single day, and your vision is what the future will be like because you deliver on that mission so brilliantly every day.

Some suggestions:

- Consider aligning your wellness mission and vision statements with existing organizational statements and objectives.
- Ask for senior leader input/feedback when developing the mission and vision statements of your wellness program.
- Be patient. Creating mission and vision statements can take time, but don't let it consume your wellness committee's time. Strive to create your mission and vision statements within the first three months of your program.
- Review your mission and vision at least annually and make sure new committee members and senior leaders are familiar with them.
- Reiterate your mission and vision whenever you have a chance. For example, include them on your monthly agenda, put them at the bottom of email communications related to the wellness program, and post them on your intranet.



Appendix 3: Communication Strategies for Your Wellness Program

Communication Strategies for Your Wellness Program

The success of your wellness program depends on your ability to communicate effectively. Incorporate these communication strategies to help build awareness, increase participation and positively impact results and outcomes of your wellness program.

Engagement is the cornerstone of any wellness program. Here are 7 messages that should be communicated each time you roll out a wellness program/initiative to increase engagement:

- We care about you and your wellbeing
- Here's the vision...
- Here's how you can be a part of it...
- This is when it all kicks off...
- We're here to help if you have questions or concerns
- Together we're better

It's all in the message. Keep these tips in mind every time you craft an email, create a poster, or write an intranet post.

1. Keep it Simple
2. Keep it positive
3. Be Creative
4. Remember the Scan Test: the average human spends only 2.7 seconds scanning a message before deciding to look further or disregard
5. Use Reminders. On average, people need 7 different reminders and 3 different modes of communication (i.e. email, posters, in-person announcements at meetings, intranet, etc.)
6. Build a brand: create a wellness program logo or tagline and make sure it's included on every piece of wellness communication

Energizing employees is a key component to keeping employees engaged and motivated. To energize your employees, messages need to be SUCCESSful.



Simple

find the core idea



Unexpected

get and keep attention



Credible

to build trust



Concrete

make things real,
outline features of
the program



Emotional

turn features
into benefits: use
photographs and people!



Stories

share stories: people
relate to people,
not statistics

Appendix 4: 10 Secrets of Successful Workplace Wellness Teams

Adapted from David Hunnicut, PhD, President of Wellness Council of America

Secret #1: Team members are formally appointed

- Formal appointment makes it clear that members have definite roles and responsibilities and that wellness is a key part of the strategic functioning of the organization
- Formal appointment most often comes from a senior executive
- If a company's wellness team is made up of volunteers, the wellness program can often fall to the wayside when other "more pressing" matters arise

Secret #2: Team members have wellness written into their job description

- This strategy leaves nothing up to chance
- Employee health and wellbeing falls to a lower priority when urgent organizational matters present themselves, but if it's written as a part of their job description, there is no confusion or miscommunication about a member's priorities at the individual or organizational level

Secret #3: The wellness team is promoted throughout the organization

- Employees will see that worksite wellness is an organizational priority
- Employees will see that team members are there to help, support, and assist them – not identify the unhealthy so that they can be terminated
- Regular promotion gives team members a sense of importance in that their roles are made known to the organization at large

Secret #4: The wellness team has strong leadership

- The team leader does not have to have a background in health or wellbeing
- The team leader roles are to establish the agenda, define priorities, meet goals and deadlines, motivate others, and communicate effectively with all the organization's constituents

Secret #5: The wellness team includes people from different areas and levels

- The team should include people from many different areas throughout the organization (i.e. human resources, safety, occupational health, finance, operations, labor unions, etc.)
- The team should include individuals from all levels of the organization: front line employees, middle management, and senior executives should all sit next to each other as co-members of the wellness team
- There is no set number of members. 10-20 members is recommended for a larger company, 4-7 for a smaller company

Appendix 4: 10 Secrets of Successful Workplace Wellness Teams (cont.)

Secret #6: The wellness team meets regularly

- Plan to meet monthly
- In the beginning stages, the team may need to meet twice monthly
- Less frequent meetings generally have agendas that aren't urgent and priorities that don't get accomplished

Secret #7: The wellness team has a formal agenda

- Without an agenda, members will lose interest
- Keep it brief and simple
- Although the team leader creates the agenda, input should come from all members
- Circulate the agenda ahead of time to members to review

Secret #8: The wellness team keeps minutes

- Taking minutes is extremely useful to record and monitor the team's activity and progress
- Circulate meeting minutes shortly after the conclusion of the meeting
- Regular minutes are especially helpful in the event of team turnover

Secret #9: The wellness team communicates frequently

- Without proper communication, the overall acceptance rate for wellness within the organization will remain low
- The team must communicate specific information as to how each and every employee can get involved
- Otherwise, wellness initiatives will appear elusive

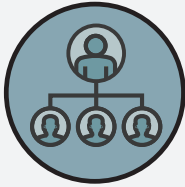
Secret #10: The wellness team participates in continuing education

- Consider continuing education for team members – invite guest experts to present to the wellness team
- Attend conferences in person or via webinars
- Sign up to receive subscriptions for wellness publications that can help members advance their understanding of workplace health and productivity management



WELCOA'S 7 BENCHMARKS EVOLVED

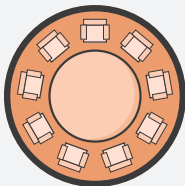
The Wellness Council of America has dedicated its efforts to studying and promoting the efforts of America's Healthiest Companies and developed the Well Workplace process. At the core of the Well Workplace model, we have identified seven key benchmarks of success. Specifically, these seven benchmarks are inherent in companies that have built results-oriented workplace wellness programs. The structure helps organizations that are dedicated to the health of their employees create a framework that is tailored toward their values, mission, vision and goals for wellness.



BENCHMARK 1

Committed and Aligned Leadership

Leaders throughout the organization that are deeply committed to the wellness of employees, and are role models of wellness in their lives. This is an important first component of creating successful worksite wellness initiatives.



BENCHMARK 2

Collaboration in Support of Wellness

Formal or informal wellness teams are representative of the organization and work together to build and sustain a successful worksite wellness initiative. The important step of engaging stakeholders at all levels helps to maintain a collaborative and cooperative approach to worksite wellness initiatives.



BENCHMARK 3

Collecting Meaningful Data to Evolve a Wellness Strategy

Efforts to support employee wellness involve understanding employee populations and assessing the current state through confidential and secure data collection. Data collection should measure what matters most to both the organization and the employees.



BENCHMARK 4

Crafting an Operating Plan

Capturing an organization's goals for wellness initiatives and documenting the details will serve as a roadmap to guide efforts and investments in workplace wellness. The wellness operating plan reflects the vision, values and purpose of an organization.



BENCHMARK 5

Choosing Initiatives that Support the Whole Employee

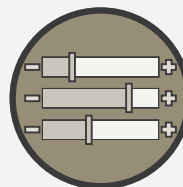
Selecting appropriate health and wellness interventions based on data collected serves to enhance decision-making skills. It brings the right intervention to an organization in support of employees across the health continuum toward healthy and thriving lives.



BENCHMARK 6

Cultivate Supportive Health Promoting Environments, Policies, and Practices

Supporting efforts toward healthy employees includes evaluating policies, practices and promotions to ensure the environment helps foster a successful wellness initiative. It is grounded in the core vision and purpose of the organization. Aim to align the wellness culture throughout the organization so there is consistency within resources, interventions and the experience at work.



BENCHMARK 7

Conduct Evaluation, Communicate, Celebrate, and Iterate

Each organization strives to develop an understanding of the impact of efforts to support employee wellness. Data collected during evaluation will determine how successful the approach has been and in what ways it can be improved. It also reflects how findings from the evaluation are communicated to ensure continuous improvement efforts in worksite wellness initiatives.

Notice of Nondiscrimination

Our Health Plan complies with federal civil rights laws. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex. The Health Plan does not exclude people or treat them differently because of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or gender.

The Health Plan:

- Provides free aids and services to people with disabilities to communicate effectively with us, such as:
 - Qualified sign language interpreters
 - Written information in other formats (large print, audio, accessible electronic formats, other formats)
- Provides free language services to people whose primary language is not English, such as:
 - Qualified interpreters
 - Information written in other languages

If you need these services, please refer to the enclosed document for ways to reach us.

If you believe that the Health Plan has failed to provide these services or discriminated in another way on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex, you can file a grievance with:

Advocacy Department
Attn: Civil Rights Coordinator
PO Box 4717
Syracuse, NY 13221
Telephone number: 1-800-614-6575
TTY number: 1-800-421-1220
Fax: 1-315-671-6656

You can file a grievance in person or by mail or fax. If you need help filing a grievance, the Health Plan's Civil Rights Coordinator is available to help you.

You can also file a civil rights complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights, electronically through the Office for Civil Rights Complaint Portal, available at <https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/portal/lobby.jsf>, or by mail or phone at:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 509F, HHH Building
Washington, D.C. 20201
1-800-368-1019, 1-800-537-7697 (TDD)
Complaint forms are available at <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/office/file/index.html>.

Attention: If you speak English free language help is available to you. Please refer to the enclosed document for ways to reach us.

Atención: Si habla español, contamos con ayuda gratuita de idiomas disponible para usted. Consulte el documento adjunto para ver las formas en que puede comunicarse con nosotros.

注意: 如果您说中文, 我们可为您提供免费的语言协助。
请参见随附的文件以获取我们的联系方式。

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Atansyon: Si ou pale Kreyòl Ayisyen gen èd gratis nan lang ki disponib pou ou. Tanpri gade dokiman ki nan anvilòp la pou jwenn fason pou kontakte nou.

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Attenzione: Se la vostra lingua parlata è l'italiano, potete usufruire di assistenza linguistica gratuita. Per sapere come ottenerla, consultate il documento allegato.

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নজর দিন: যদি আপনি বাংলা ভাষায় কথা বলেন তাহলে আপনার জন্য সহায়তা উপলভ্য রয়েছে। আমাদের সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ করার জন্য অনুগ্রহ করে সংযুক্ত নথি পড়ুন।

Uwaga: jeśli mówisz po polsku, możesz skorzystać z bezpłatnej pomocy językowej. Patrz załączony dokument w celu uzyskania informacji na temat sposobów kontaktu z nami.

تنبيه: إذا كنت تتحدث اللغة العربية، فإن المساعدة اللغوية المجانية متاحة لك. يرجى الرجوع إلى الوثيقة المرفقة لمعرفة كيفية الوصول إلينا.

Remarque : si vous parlez français, une assistance linguistique gratuite vous est proposée. Consultez le document ci-joint pour savoir comment nous joindre.

نوٹ: اگر آپ اردو بولتے ہیں تو آپ کے لیے زبان کی مفت مدد دستیاب ہے۔ ہم سے رابطہ کرنے کے طریقوں کے لیے منسلک دستاویز ملاحظہ کریں۔

Paunawa: Kung nagsasalita ka ng Tagalog, may maaari kang kuning libheng tulong sa wika. Mangyaring sumangguni sa nakalakip na dokumento para sa mga paraan ng pakikipag-ugnayan sa amin.

Προσοχή: Αν μιλάτε Ελληνικά μπορούμε να σας προσφέρουμε βοήθεια στη γλώσσα σας δωρεάν. Δείτε το έγγραφο που εσωκλείεται για πληροφορίες σχετικά με τους διαθέσιμους τρόπους επικοινωνίας μαζί μας.

Kujdes: Nëse flisni shqip, ju ofrohet ndihmë gjuhësore falas. Drejtojuni dokumentit bashkëlidhur për mënyra se si të na kontaktoni.



Right here. For you.