



How to Start a Wellness Program

Wellness Programs have been shown to improve employee morale, reduce absenteeism, and increase health and longevity. Employees of political subdivisions often work at their jobs for many years and then become retirees. For these reasons along with continually increasing healthcare premiums, it is critical to make an investment in the health of your employees today. TML Intergovernmental Employee Benefits Pool (TML IEBP) believes that the return on investment in a sound Wellness Program will outpace any investment made.

The following steps can be taken to implement and administer a successful Wellness Program:

Organize a Wellness Committee

Select a wellness liaison to assist in the launch and continued success of the Wellness Program (larger employers may elect to have a Wellness Committee with multiple members). Be sure to select the right liaison. Getting employees engaged and participating in a Wellness Program will be more productive if the person promoting the program is excited about wellness.

Establish a Mission Statement

Establish a worksite Mission Statement recognizing employee health and wellness as being important to the long-term success and well being of the organization. Put employee health and wellness issues at parity with other worksite issues including worksite safety.

Enlist Senior Management Support

A major priority of a Wellness Program is attracting employees to participate. It is important to give employees a letter from management briefly explaining the program signed by the Mayor, Superintendent, City Manager or Manager. Knowing that management is supporting and encouraging participation is very important.

Press Release

Submitting a press release to the local newspaper can accomplish three very important objectives: encouraging employees to participate, generating wellness-related excitement and accountability within the community, and demonstrating to taxpayers that the employer is encouraging a healthier, more productive workforce and is mindful of the rising cost of healthcare.

Communication

Employees must be well educated about the Wellness Program if they are to participate. Provide ongoing communication through email, newsletters, posters, payroll stuffers, etc. In addition to program details, be sure to point out the value of the program, share motivating success stories, and spotlight group efforts.

Encourage Participation

Be sure the Wellness Program is convenient, emphasizes family fitness, and offers a variety of wellness options such as fitness center membership discounts, onsite stress management classes, smoking cessation programs, etc. Many of these are already available to TML IEBP members through www.bewellattmliebp.org. TML IEBP can also help negotiate discounts through local gyms or weight loss programs.

Wellness Program Components

Consider the unique needs of your employee population through the use of before and after employee surveys, and/or a Wellness Suggestions & Comments Box. Customize the Wellness Program by including some or all of the following:

- Establish a physical activity program at the worksite (map and measure walking paths in and around the area surrounding the worksite)
- Encourage healthy foods at worksite meetings and in vending machines
- Research and post local wellness initiatives that are occurring in the community
- Create a wellness calendar that highlights organized activities for the month – events should be planned in advance and tie into community programs, physical activity sponsored by programs, and national programs (such as an organized 5K Walk/Run)
- Create a Maintenance Program/Worksheet (sample template available)
- Contests

Provide Incentives

Incentives are a powerful motivator for employees. Reward participation with enrollment awards, goal achievement awards, monetary awards, or benefit incentives. One way to provide incentives is to tie rewards to activity through a scorecard/maintenance program with quarterly incentives or rewards.

Promote TML IEBP Wellness Tools

Encourage employees to take advantage of the wellness tools already available through TML IEBP. These tools should be key components of the Wellness Program:

★ *BeWell at TML IEBP*

The BeWell at TML IEBP website at www.bewellattmliebp.org contains exclusive programs and discounts available to TML IEBP members. Some of the products included are Dental and Vision discount plans, smoking cessation programs, a health library, and special rates with popular physical fitness centers and debt management programs.

★ *Web Wellness Portal*

The TML IEBP Web Wellness Portal contains Healthy Initiatives Incentive Plan information, information on TML IEBP's Multidisciplinary Medical Management Team, the Health Knowledgebase, e-Learning Lessons, and a wide array of health improvement topics. Log on to *my*TML IEBP at www.tmliebp.org, then click on the Healthy Initiatives Web Wellness Portal link.

