



How to Improve Health, Happiness, and Productivity in Your Workplace

NHPS does not currently work in the area of worksite wellness, but we are providing general information and valuable resources (see Worksite Wellness Resources) to assist in the development of worksite wellness programs.

Obesity in Delaware and the U.S.

There has been a dramatic increase in both child and adult obesity in the United States over the past 20 years. This trend will most likely continue unless children, youth and adults are educated on healthy behaviors and provided more opportunities to make healthy choices.

According to the 2003-2005 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) an estimated 66 percent of U.S. adults are either overweight or obese, which means that less than a third of U.S. adults are at a healthy weight. In Delaware, 64% of adults and 37% of children/youth are overweight or obese.

Why does obesity matter?

Not only can child and adult obesity be costly, but it also leads to a number of health problems, including:

- Premature death
- Type 2 diabetes
- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Hypertension
- High blood cholesterol
- Psychological disorders such as depression
- Osteoarthritis
- Increased surgical risk
- Asthma
- Sleep Apnea
- Premature death
- Psychological difficulties due to social stigmatization

Cost of Obesity

- 1) *Direct costs*: health care resources for the management of obesity and related diseases (e.g. preventative, diagnostic, and treatment services related to obesity)
- 2) *Indirect costs*: morbidity and mortality rates. Morbidity costs are defined as the value of income lost through decreased productivity, restricted activity, absenteeism, and bed days. Mortality costs are associated with the loss of income due to premature death.
- 3) *Intangible costs*: social and personal loss associated with obesity and its related illnesses.

Overweight and obesity related health problems can have a considerable economic consequence on the health care system and in the workplace. According the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, in 2000 the economic cost of obesity in the United States was about \$117 billion (\$61 billion direct and \$56 billion indirect).

Benefits of Worksite Wellness Programs

Most adults spend more time at work than anywhere else, so worksites provide an ideal venue for wellness education. Worksite wellness programs and policies can help educate your employees on healthy behaviors and create environments that enable and support healthy behaviors. Creating healthy workplaces benefits both employees and the bottom line of organizations that create them.

Tangible Benefits

- Lower health care costs
- Reduced absenteeism
- Reduced use of health care benefits
- Reduced workers compensation / disability
- Reduced injuries

Intangible Benefits

- Improvement in employee morale
- Increased employee loyalty
- Less organizational conflict
- More productive employees
- Improved decision-making capabilities

Return on Investment (ROI)

A company's return-on-investment due to worksite wellness can be realized through reduction in medical costs, absenteeism, and workers compensation. For example, Glaxo-Smith Kline implemented a voluntary "Contract for Health and Wellness" program in 1997, with the estimated cost per participant of \$100. The program covered five focus areas: tobacco use, nutrition, activity, stress management/depression, and preventative health practices. During the 4 year evaluation period, it was found that the isolated impact of the program represented average cost savings of \$613 per participant. A return on investment of over 600% was represented with the initial investment of \$100 per participant.

Examples of Worksite Wellness Initiatives

There are many levels of worksite wellness programs– from awareness programs to comprehensive programs tied into health insurance benefits. Following are some examples of workplace interventions that promote healthy lifestyle habits:

- Payroll stuffer
- Health screenings onsite
- Lunch n' Learn presentations
- Onsite fitness center or reimbursement for area gym
- Smoking cessation program
- Designated walking track
- Healthy food choices in the cafeteria and vending machines
- Weight loss / fitness contests
- Weekly health tips via email
- Health risk appraisals
- Online wellness programs
- Health and wellness fairs