

Involvement Leads to Success

Some Kansas hospitals have established an employee wellness committee to provide guidance on the development and implementation of a worksite health promotion program. Having a worksite wellness committee can help the hospital implement policy changes, such as switching to healthier food and beverage options. A committee can involve employees in establishing goals, setting policies and encouraging behavior change. Having peers advocate for policy changes can make implementation go more smoothly. Employee involvement and buy-in lead to successful results.

Creating a Worksite Wellness Committee

Peers Advocate for Healthy Options

Needs Assessment

A needs assessment is a great place to begin a worksite health promotion program. The needs assessment provides a baseline against which to measure progress, and it identifies areas that should be addressed by the committee. Be sure that the needs assessment includes a diverse group of employees – from all levels of the organization, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, ages and genders.

Understanding current employee lifestyle behaviors will help the wellness committee set goals and objectives and identify areas of greatest concern. The findings can help the committee focus on features of the workplace environment that support or present obstacles to healthy lifestyles. For many hospitals, focusing on food and beverage policies is a good starting place to address concerns with obesity and chronic diseases like diabetes and high blood pressure.

The baseline data can be used to design the program, encourage participation, minimize barriers, ensure access and successfully communicate about worksite wellness activities. Additionally, the data become a benchmark against which to measure the success of policy changes and specific programs implemented to improve health.

Committee Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the worksite wellness committee might include the following:

- Evaluating current programs, services and policies at your workplace;
- Assessing employee needs and preferences;
- Developing a health promotion operating plan, including a vision statement, goals and objectives;
- Developing policies to embed a culture of health across the organization in a systematic way; and
- Assisting in implementing, monitoring and evaluating worksite health promotion activities.



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Creating a Worksite Wellness Committee

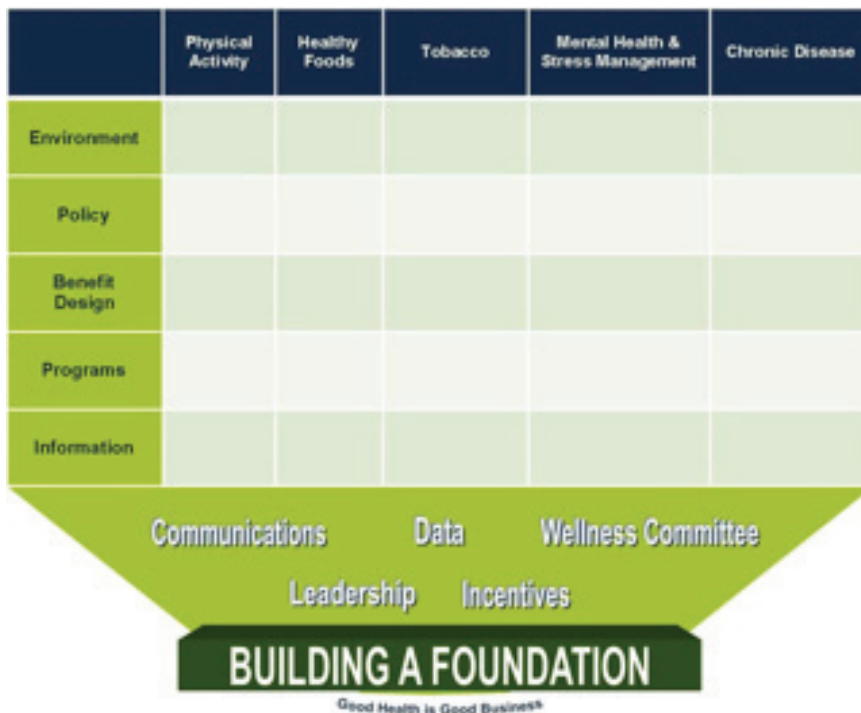
Keys to Success

Some of the critical components to the success of a wellness committee include:

- Make sure your wellness committee is representative of your worksite, and include people from all shifts as well as all levels of management. Complex and multi-level initiatives need to be planned and implemented by interdisciplinary and inter-departmental teams.
- Make sure you are not asking for “volunteers” for the committee, and don’t just recruit the employees you perceive to be “healthy” or interested in health. The committee needs to be representative of your worksite.
- Ensure this is a standing committee, not a short-lived task force.
- The committee must be recognized by the top management (e.g., CEO or administrator) and middle management. The committee must have the power to recommend or enact policy.
- The committee needs to form a mission statement to help guide its work. For example, the

committee’s mission could be “to develop a culture of health.”

- The committee needs to operate like others at your worksite. There needs to be a chair or coordinator, meeting agendas, multiple people tackling different components of projects, etc.
- When possible, the committee needs to be responsible for an operating budget, even if it is just \$50/year.
- Committee members need to be held accountable for their work. Their health promotion duties need to be written into position descriptions and a component for annual reviews. Committee members also should be recognized for their accomplishments.
- The committee must have access to de-identified data (e.g., employee medical costs, health risk appraisal data, etc.) to help guide their work.
- The committee needs to meet regularly (at least monthly when getting established, then at least quarterly). Be sure to report successes and challenges.
- Consider learning opportunities for the wellness committee.



Wellness Committee Composition

Consider recruiting people in your hospital who have responsibility for some aspect of employee health or well-being (e.g., human resources, safety director, risk manager, communications, dietary, education, etc.) as well as people responsible for environmental and policy changes (e.g., facilities and operations, legal department). Wellness committees also enable you to gain direct employee input on your program, so consider assuring at-large employee representation, including all shifts and all levels in the organization as well.

What Does It Cost?

In terms of staffing, the following guidelines suggest the staffing requirements for a worksite wellness committee. In smaller hospitals, the committee may be assigned to someone in human resources or staff education. For hospitals with large employee populations, a robust worksite wellness program may require a dedicated employee.

- 0.1 FTE for 25 employees or less
- 0.4 FTE for between 25 and 100 employees
- 0.8 FTE for between 100 and 250 employees
- 1.0 FTE for between 250 and 500 employees
- 1.5 FTE for between 500 and 1,000 employees