



Evaluating Worksite Wellness

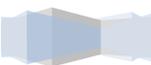
What do the words “worksite wellness” bring to mind? I bet the first thought isn’t evaluations. Instead you may envision walks, weight-loss challenges, point structured incentives and health insurance premium differentials. As employees are encouraged to implement a “healthier” lifestyle the value for worksites to take the time and the resources to evaluate their environment and employees are becoming more necessary.

So how and where do you get started, especially if you already have wellness programs, a wellness committee, health risk appraisals and all the other goodies that can be offered through wellness? You can begin collecting data at any point in your wellness initiative. Many times evaluation is an afterthought until the excitement of the wellness initiative wears off, programs become redundant and companies find it difficult to keep employee engagement. About this time, employers will move from a “carrot to a stick” approach as the best way to keep long term participation by employees.

Completing a worksite wellness evaluation and employee interest survey will help keep participation up and your workforce actively engaged in wellness programs by better understanding your target audience and getting an initial idea of their current health habits and interest areas. In addition, this simple task can save thousands of dollars for a company in time and resources. Interest surveys and evaluations of wellness programs, both pre and post, will help keep your company focus on course with what your employees want and are willing to change in their wellness. The survey can be tailored to your worksite and can be done in paper form or using survey instruments on the internet. Using a computer survey instrument has the added advantage of being able to collect and analyze data automatically.

Evaluations and assessments will help to identify your worksite’s strengths, areas in need of improvement and can be used as a baseline measure. These tools also will aid with your wellness committee recommendations on environmental change, making the worksite more supportive of healthy behaviors. You may find some of the actions for supporting healthy behaviors are easy to do and others may not be feasible or efficient in your worksite.

To carry out an evaluation first identify a workgroup who will be responsible for completing the assessment; this may be a subset of your wellness committee. Forming a diverse group from all areas and levels of your organization is important in order to have a meaningful assessment and a successful planning then implementation process. Suggested members of this diverse group include human resources, various department employees, administrators, supervisors and wellness staff.



After gathering the assessment information, determine which areas the wellness committee will place their focus. Establish a schedule for the committee to meet and monitor the progress. Then set up a plan for annual assessments, so that the assessment can serve as a tool for continuous improvement and accountability over time. Assessments will help to establish a starting reference point, wellness policies, environmental supports and program activities. It's an easy and inexpensive way to make sure all your supporting wellness programming is focusing on areas in which your employees are interested in making changes or improvements. Once again, in the long run this will save time and money.

There are many resources that are available free of charge designed to help company's evaluate their new or established wellness programs. You can check out the Wisconsin Worksite Wellness Resource Toolkit and WELCOA's website for free copies of worksite wellness assessments. Whatever method your company uses to gather information, make it as easy as possible for employees to complete and submit so you get a high return rate. Nothing works better than incentives or prizes for people who complete the survey!

For assistance in evaluating wellness at your workplace, contact Sharon Rateike, corporate wellness program coordinator at (920) 568-5475 or Sharon.Rateike@forthc.com.

