

# Worksite Wellness Program: You Can't Afford NOT to Have One!

Winter 2013

## Let's Talk Numbers:

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that employee obesity and inactivity costs employers an estimated \$13 billion a year (2009).
- Approximately 9.1% of all health care costs in the US are related to obesity and overweight (CDC, 2006).
- Employers can save an estimated \$3,400 per year for every individual who quits smoking (CDC, 2008).
- Studies by the University of Michigan and Johnson and Johnson show that employers can save:
  - \* \$269 a year for every inactive employee who becomes physically active
  - \* \$1200 a year for every employee who reduces his/her cholesterol levels from 240mg to 190mg
  - \* \$177 a year for every obese employee who establishes and maintains a healthy weight.

## What is Worksite Wellness?

Worksite wellness refers to the education and activities a worksite may do to promote healthy lifestyles to employees and their families. The Health Improvement Program at the Kent County Health Department offers worksite wellness programs that focus on risk factors affecting chronic diseases and obesity. Examples of wellness programming the Health Improvement Program offers include cholesterol and blood pressure screenings, health education classes, and a walking program. A successful worksite wellness program can also include subsidized use of fitness facilities, internal policies promoting healthy behaviors, and other activities, policies or environmental changes that affect the health of employees.



## Why Worksite Wellness?

### Wellness programs help control costs

An investment in your employees' health may lower health care costs or slow the increase in providing that important benefit. In fact, employees with more risk factors,

including being overweight, smoking and having diabetes, cost more to insure and pay more for health care than people with fewer risk factors.

An employee wellness program can raise awareness so employees



### The Cost—and Benefit—of a Worksite Wellness Program

- In a summary of 28 articles, it was estimated that for every \$1 invested in a wellness program, businesses saved \$3.48 (Aldana, 2001).

with fewer risk factors remain in a lower-cost group. It can also encourage employees with more risk factors to make lifestyle changes to improve their quality of life and lower costs. The payoff in dollars as well as in quality of life can have a big impact on your company's bottom line.

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## Absenteeism: Another Loss to Your Bottom Line

- **Direct costs from lost time totaled nearly \$.15 on every dollar spent on payroll (Strum, 2002)**
- **Obese employees are not only almost twice as likely to be absent from work but 75% more likely to have a high rate of absenteeism (seven or more absences during a 6 month period) than employees with a healthy weight (Tucker, 1998).**
- **Cigarette smokers are absent from work on average 6.5 days per year more than nonsmokers (American Cancer Society, 2000)**

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### Increase productivity

Healthier employees are more productive. This has been demonstrated in factory settings and office environments in which workers with workplace wellness initiatives miss less work. Wellness programs also help to reduce presenteeism, the problem of workers being on the job but, because of personal health and life issues, not fully engaged and productive.

### Reduce absenteeism

Healthier employees miss less work. Companies that support wellness and healthy decisions have a greater percentage of



employees at work every day. Because health frequently carries over into better family choices, your employees may miss less work caring for ill family members as well. The cost savings of providing a wellness program can also be measured in reduced overtime to cover absent employees and other aspects of absenteeism.

### Improve morale and enhanced image for the organization

A company that cares about its employees' health is often seen as a better place to work. Those companies save money by retaining workers who appreciate the benefit of a wellness program and can attract new employees in a competitive market.



## The Big Problem with Obesity:

- **30% of Michigan adults are obese and 35% are overweight (MDCH, 2008).**
- **In 2008, the annual healthcare cost of obesity in the US was estimated to be \$147 billion a year. Medical expenses for obese employees are estimated to be 42% higher than for a person with a healthy weight (CDC).**

Article provided by: Department of Health and Family Services, Division of Public Health, Nutrition and Physical Activity Program, Wisconsin Partnership for Activity and Nutrition. Wisconsin Work-site Resource Kit to Prevent Obesity and Related Chronic Diseases. August 2006.

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## Worksite Cholesterol and Blood Pressure Screenings Available through the

Kent County Health Department,  
Health Improvement Program

Call for Information:

**616.632.7290**

\*Worksite Screening includes either a 12-hour Fasting Full Lipid Profile (Total Cholesterol, HDL, LDL and Triglycerides) or a Non-fasting Test (Total Cholesterol and HDL), Blood Pressure and Pulse Measurements, Heart Disease, Stroke and Diabetes Risk Assessments and immediate results are explained in a comprehensive Wellness Report.



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