

# Knox County Health Department **Worksite Wellness Toolkit**

*For Small Businesses*



Knox County  
**Health Department**  
Every Person. A Healthy Person



**KNOXVILLE**  
CHAMBER

140 Dameron Avenue • Knoxville, Tennessee • (865) 215-5170

## Introduction

According to the online encyclopedia Wikipedia, a small business is defined as a privately owned and operated [corporation](#), [partnership](#), or [sole proprietorship](#) with a small number of employees and relatively low sales volume. The legal definition of “small” varies by country and by industry. In the [United States](#) the [Small Business Administration](#) establishes small business size standards on an industry-by-industry basis, but generally specifies a small business as having fewer than 500 employees for manufacturing businesses and less than \$7 million in annual receipts for most nonmanufacturing businesses. In addition to number of employees, other methods used to classify small companies include annual [sales](#), value of [assets](#) and [net profit](#), alone or in a mixed definition.

As a small business employer, initiating a worksite wellness program may seem a daunting task. However, did you know that many wellness initiatives can be implemented with minimal planning and for little or no cost to the company directly? The next few pages contain valuable information on ways to encourage employers and employees to be proactive in their health which could result in:

- Improving employee health, productivity and quality of life
- Reducing the cost of health care, benefits, insurance and worker’s compensation
- Creating a more desirable work environment

As an abridged version of the Knox County Health Department Worksite Wellness Toolkit, this document was specifically created to assist smaller businesses in incorporating wellness initiatives into their worksites. Knox County Health Department (KCHD) would like to thank the Knoxville Chamber of Commerce for helping distribute this toolkit. For more information or assistance, please contact KCHD’s Healthy Weight Department at (865) 215-5170 or by email: [health@knoxcounty.org](mailto:health@knoxcounty.org).

## Why Worksite Wellness

### Health Care and the Bottom Line



Health insurance costs affect business profitability and productivity. Many of these costs are related to preventable illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure. Nearly \$1.6 billion was spent in Tennessee on health care costs related to obesity alone in 2008, according to America's Health Rankings (a collaborative report from United Health Foundation, the American Public Health Association and Partnership for Prevention). Obesity,

diabetes, heart disease and high blood pressure can all be improved, if not prevented, with appropriate measures to improve health status. The result could reduce the amount the business pays in health insurance premiums. Even if the company doesn't offer health insurance, implementing a wellness program will:

- Decrease workers compensation claims
- Decrease employee turnover and
- Decrease sick leave and absenteeism

### Employees will enjoy these benefits:

INCREASED	DECREASED
✓ Productivity	✓ Blood Pressure
✓ Mental Alertness	✓ Heart Rate
✓ Energy	✓ Weight/Body Fat
✓ Morale/Self-esteem	✓ Cholesterol
✓ Overall Well-being/Health	✓ Blood Sugar
✓ Understanding of Body Function	✓ Stress Level

Worksite wellness is an investment that cannot be ignored by employers. Even small steps make a big difference in the well-being of your company, and its employees and could result in saving thousands of dollars.

## Important steps that should be included in every wellness program

### **Step 1:** Get support from all management staff:

Management must support worksite wellness. Programs are more successful when company leaders promote, encourage and participate in positive health behaviors.

### **Step 2:** Listen to your employees:

Create a simple employee survey or questionnaire with questions about interest in learning more about chronic diseases, being able to exercise during work hours, etc. Use Appendix C in the Knox County Health Department Worksite Wellness Toolkit to design a survey or simply customize the one provided. Allowing employees input in the design process will increase participation and the likelihood of long-term success.

### **Step 3:** Develop a Plan:

Use the employee survey results to develop a plan with set goals. Measurable outcomes should be included to gauge employee interest before, during and after a program's completion on whether the program was interesting, educational and something they would like to continue participating in. Track of employee feedback to determine whether or not the program needs to be modified, continued or terminated.



## Examples of Programs and their relative costs

### **NO COST**

- 1) Call local gyms and work out facilities to see if they will offer a discount for your employees to join
- 2) Allow flexible lunch schedules so employees can exercise before, during lunch or after work
- 3) Contact your local health department to speak to your employees about topics of interest during their lunch break (ex: heart health, nutrition, smoking cessation, diabetes, etc.)
- 4) Encourage employee participation in local community events and activities such as fundraiser walk/runs, hikes, bike rides, etc.
- 5) Offer onsite fitness classes from a certified instructor which are employee paid
- 6) Organize support groups designed to encourage fellow employees in their healthy lifestyle changes
- 7) Start walking groups or clubs (before, during or after work)
- 8) Make adjustments to what is offered in company vending machines; include primarily or only healthy choices
- 9) Designate a "special" parking spot for those who reach various health related goals/milestones



## Examples of Programs and their relative costs

### **MINIMAL COST**

- 1) Provide small incentives for displaying healthy behaviors such as exercising regularly and getting regular health checks (blood pressure, blood glucose, gynecological exams, prostate exams, etc) such as stress balls, gift cards to “healthy” stores, water bottles
- 2) Place healthy messages in high traffic areas including the restrooms, in the stairwell, payroll envelopes or elevators
- 3) Hire a fitness instructor to teach classes of interest to employees a few times per week
- 4) Pay a portion of your employee’s health club membership or class, such as a smoking cessation course, to encourage healthier lifestyles
- 5) Provide a clean, private workspace for employees to nurse or pump breast milk and policies to support nursing mothers and their needs
- 6) Assure that stairwells are clean, well-lit and accessible
- 7) Include healthy tips and recipes in the company newsletter
- 8) Subscribe to a wellness magazine and/or give a subscription to employees who reach certain milestones in their effort to improve their health

### **VARYING COST**

- 1) A dressing room and shower available for employees to use before and after exercise
- 2) Give larger incentives for accomplishments such as a George Foreman Grill, exercise mat or ball, dumbbells, plaque for “job well done,” paid time off, insulated cooler/bag and gift cards to a sporting goods store
- 3) Reduce what employee pays for health insurance premiums
- 4) Create a workout room with a variety of equipment for employees to use such as dumbbells, rubber tubing, exercise balls, yoga mats, etc.
- 5) Contract services from a local provider to do health screenings for all your employees

Hopefully, several of these examples are things your company could implement easily or you have thought of other ideas as you have read through this document. So where do you begin? Follow the steps outlined earlier in this publication, including support from management, finding out what interests your employees have, and designing a wellness program or implementing wellness initiatives that fit your company! Measuring success is important as well, so remember to set goals and periodically make sure the program is going in the right direction.

## Conclusion

Tennessee's health is on a downward slope. Worksite wellness should be a business priority. As a small business owner, it is very important to consider implementing wellness initiatives to develop a healthier group of employees and therefore reduce the company's cost associated with unhealthy behaviors. A healthier workforce will improve production, save company dollars, and begin moving Tennessee in the proper direction in regards to health. If this toolkit was helpful, please refer to the more detailed, *Knox County Health Department Worksite Wellness Toolkit* for useful forms and documents.

