

## Getting Your Program Started

The Wellness Council of America (WELCOA), an organization dedicated to the promotion of worksite wellness, has identified seven best practices for employers to follow when building a successful workplace wellness program.

- **Create committed and aligned leadership.** A commitment from the top is key to the success of any wellness initiative. Management must understand the benefits of a wellness program for both the employees and the organization, and be willing to commit sufficient funding.
- **Foster collaboration in support of wellness.** Wellness teams should include a variety of people from all levels of your company. These individuals will drive program development, implementation and evaluation. Consider recruiting employees from human resources, legal, marketing, management and administrative staff.
- **Collect meaningful data that will drive your health initiatives and wellness strategy.** Gathering data to assess employee health interests and risks will help guide you in developing your program. This process may involve conducting a survey of employee interest in various health initiatives, health risk assessments (HRAs) and claims analysis to determine your current employees' disease risk.
- **Craft an operating plan.** An annual operating plan is important for your program's success and should include a mission statement along with specific, measurable short- and long-term goals and objectives. A written plan provides continuity when members of the wellness committee change and is instrumental in holding the team accountable to the goals, objectives and timeline agreed upon.
- **Choose appropriate health initiatives that support the whole employee.** The health initiatives that you choose should flow naturally from your data (survey, HRA aggregate report, claims), be cohesive with your goals and objectives and be in line with what both management and employees want from the wellness program.
- **Create a supportive environment, policies and practices.** A supportive environment provides employees with encouragement, opportunity and rewards. Your workplace should celebrate and reward health achievements and have a management team that models healthy behavior. Most importantly, be sure to involve employees in various aspect of the wellness program from its design and promotion to its implementation and evaluation.
- **Conduct evaluations, communicate, celebrate and iterate.** Evaluation involves taking a close look at your goals and objectives to determine whether you achieved your desired result. Evaluation allows you to celebrate goals that have been achieved and to discontinue or change ineffective initiatives.

For more information, please see WELCOA's website at [www.welcoa.org](http://www.welcoa.org).

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