



New Workplace Wellness Guide from Transamerica Center for Health Studies and Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

Comprehensive Report Covers Employee and Organizational Health Factors Steps for Implementing a Workplace Wellness Program and Employer Success Stories

LOS ANGELES – October 6, 2015 – The rise in health care costs has led many employers to find new ways to help employees stay healthy and productive while simultaneously reducing health care costs associated with preventable chronic diseases. A trend to address this issue is the growth of workplace wellness or health promotion programs. To gain insight into the best practices that are driving the most successful workplace wellness programs across the country, national nonprofit Transamerica Center for Health Studies (TCHS) partnered with the Institute for Health and Productivity Studies (IHPS) at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health to release [*From Evidence to Practice: Workplace Wellness that Works*](#), an evidence-based, straightforward workplace health promotion guide for employers.

“The value of this in-depth workplace wellness guide is the simple and cost-effective recommendations for employers that have been proven to be effective in other work environments,” said Hector De La Torre, Executive Director of Transamerica Center for Health Studies. “A majority of American adults spend most of their waking hours at work, which can help or hinder personal health and well-being. Therefore, employers are uniquely positioned to structure their workplaces to promote healthy choices and improve productivity—which can reduce organizational healthcare costs.”

The guide was developed using scientific and academic literature reviews, analysis and subject matter expert interviews that focused on the following areas:

- **Ten individual health risk factors**
- **Nine organizational success factors**
- **Nine employer workplace wellness program examples**

TCHS partnered with Dr. Ron Goetzel, a senior scientist and director at IHPS, who led the research project and worked with his Institute team to develop a series of actionable steps to help guide employers in designing and implementing a new workplace wellness program or evaluating an existing program.

“To do this the right way, employers must address both the individual risk factors affecting their employees and the organizational factors that help or hinder employees’ efforts to reduce their risks and get healthier,” said Goetzel. “The strongest workplace wellness programs are building a

culture of health that interweaves individual health needs with the overall company goals, and are backed by senior leadership.”

Below are five workplace wellness program best practices that have been successfully implemented by various employers, as highlighted in the report:

- **Administer a baseline survey** to assess employees’ physical activity levels, dietary preferences, general health status and interests in health and wellness options. For American Cast Iron Pipe, employees take a Health Risk Assessment (HRA) to determine their health risks and set appropriate goals. Following the HRA phase, employees are placed into one of four well body clubs and incentivized and supported by the wellness team and leadership throughout the year to meet their health goals.
- **Identify a senior leader who will support and participate** in the company wellness program to demonstrate the importance of making health and well-being a priority. Seth Goldman, co-founder and TeaEO of Honest Tea, created the company with health in mind and offers an array of wellness and fitness classes on-site.
- **Make bold choices to implement changes** and create a culture of healthy employees. Cleveland Clinic created a smoke-free environment in 2006. The company updated policies, including zero tolerance for smoking on their campus and covering all costs for employees who smoked to participate in tobacco cessation programs.
- **Implement smart incentives** to reward positive behavior and results by dedicated employees. Medical Mutual of Ohio upped its maximum wellness incentive from \$50 to \$350 in 2010 and then from \$350 to \$1,000 in 2014. Participation rates rose to 90 percent for Medical Mutual’s health assessment and 70 percent for its full wellness program.
- **Dedicate communication** to widely share program updates and evaluations to assess the success of the program. The University of Michigan attributes part of the success of its employee wellness program to effective communications through a variety of channels, including a robust and interactive online presence.

The employer interviews showed that workplace wellness programs are most effective when they are clearly tailored to the goals and needs of specific populations and provide sufficient opportunities for employee engagement and input. The new guide produced by TCHS and Johns Hopkins includes steps to address a variety of factors affecting different populations of employees and the workforce at large.

“The solution of the declining health of the United States worker lies inside companies. If we can invest in employees, we can solve a local, regional and national problem. The healthcare industry doesn’t own the solution, the insurance companies don’t own it, our companies do,” said Garrick Throckmorton, Assistant Vice President of Organization Development, Allegacy Federal Credit Union.

ABOUT THE TRANSAMERICA CENTER FOR HEALTH STUDIES®

The [Transamerica Center for Health Studies](#)® is a division of the [Transamerica Institute](#),® a nonprofit, private foundation. TCHS informs the national health care conversation by bringing clarity to the complex decision-making regarding health coverage and personal health and wellness. TCHS is focused on empowering consumers and employers so that they can achieve the best value and protection from their health coverage, as well as the best outcomes in their personal health and wellness. Through its broad-based analysis and research findings, the Transamerica Center for Health Studies offers consumers and employers a guide to navigate the financial implications of the health care decisions they are facing.

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH AND PRODUCTIVITY STUDIES (IHPS)

The mission of the Institute for Health and Productivity Studies (IHPS) is to bridge the gap between academia, the business community, and the healthcare policy world by bringing academic resources into policy debates and day-to-day business decisions, and bringing health and productivity management issues into academia. A collaborative established between the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health's [Department of Health, Behavior & Society](#) and [Truven Health Analytics](#), IHPS conducts empirical research on the relationship between employee health and well-being, healthcare utilization and costs, and work-related productivity. Studies performed by IHPS help inform decision-makers in both private and public health sectors on issues related to the health and productivity cost burden of certain health risk factors and common disease conditions, and the impact that innovative health, safety and productivity management programs have on medical, safety, and productivity-related outcomes.

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