



New Workplace Wellness Employer Guide from Transamerica Center for Health Studies and UC Berkeley Interdisciplinary Center for Healthy Workplaces Published

Free Guide for Employers to Identify Wellness Programs That Fit Their Unique Workplace and Employee Characteristics

LOS ANGELES – February 6, 2018 – National nonprofit [Transamerica Center for Health Studies](#)[®] (TCHS) together with the [Interdisciplinary Center for Healthy Workplaces](#) (ICHW) at UC Berkeley, announced today the release of [Finding Fit: Implementing Workplace Wellness Programs Successfully](#), a helpful resource for organizations offering wellness programs for their employees. In addition to an expectation of lower employee health costs, a majority of employers say their wellness programs have a positive impact on job satisfaction, workplace commitment, turnover and absenteeism. While more than six in 10 employers (62 percent) say they offer wellness programs, only 40 percent of employees (with employer-based coverage) say they work for an employer who offers a wellness program (Transamerica Center for Health Studies 2017 Consumer and Employer surveys). To gain insight into this difference in perception and to give employers tools to shape wellness programs for their employees, TCHS and ICHW collaborated to release an evidence-based, workplace wellness program [Employer Guide](#).

Available for free, the Employer Guide (with an emphasis on small and medium organizations) focuses on the types of wellness programs that have been shown to be effective and provides a step-by-step process for identifying one or more wellness programs that fit each employer's unique characteristics. This approach enables employers to assess which wellness program is most compatible with their day-to-day realities and would encourage employee engagement.

“In this guide, we focused on giving employers the tools to match their workforce and workplace to their wellness program options. Not every wellness program fits every organization,” said Hector De La Torre, executive director of Transamerica Center for Health Studies. “With this approach, employers can promote employee health, increase participation and improve productivity.”

This guide helps organizational leaders choose a wellness program that meets their employees' needs given their time and resources. Small and medium organizations face a number of limitations due to their size and financial reserves, but employees' health and well-being needs are a constant regardless of organization size. Employees need a safe, socially supportive and health-promoting work environment that not only supports wellness but also enhances productivity.

“We have looked at the existing literature on wellness programs in general and created a method based on our research for how organization leaders can design an effective wellness strategy that fits their constraints,” said Dr. Cristina Banks, director of the Interdisciplinary Center for Healthy Workplaces at UC Berkeley. “Organization leaders may focus on employee healthcare costs and

not know or understand the link between employee wellness and organizational outcomes such as productivity, absenteeism, turnover and disability. We help company leadership understand how the organization will benefit from employee wellness and how they can find a wellness program that fits their specific circumstances.”

Eight different wellness program types were identified, and they are ordered from low to high employer involvement (and investment) below:

- Education Programs - pursued by employees at or outside of work
- Social Community Building by the Employee - engagement in social activities to enhance social relationships
- Social Community Building by the Organization – employer-led ownership of improving the workforce social community
- Preventive Care Program (Lite) — health assessments and preventative screening by the insurance vendor
- Healthy Habit Development (Lite) – organization-led interventions encouraging healthier personal and work-related habits
- Healthy Habit Development (Enhanced) – physical worksite environment enhancements facilitating healthier workday habits
- Preventive Care Program (Enhanced) – partnership between healthcare providers and employer leadership to reduce incidence of serious illness and disease
- Disease Management – employer investments in on-site medical clinics and/or occupational health programs

A comprehensive literature review of wellness program effectiveness and participation rates was also undertaken. To get a broad understanding of employee and employer perspectives, results from the national employer and employee surveys on health and wellness topics administered in 2017 by the Harris Poll on behalf of TCHS were analyzed. Finally, focus group discussions with more than 20 small- and medium-sized organizations explored various issues regarding adoption of wellness programs and determinants of participation.

To create the assessment tool, each wellness program type was analyzed by its essential requirements for successful implementation. A list of opportunities (called Facilitators) and constraints (called Barriers) are the basis of a profile for each wellness program type. An employer’s assessment of the presence of its own Facilitators and Barriers shows which are incompatible with requirements, and which are compatible for specific wellness programs.

The guide also provides guidance on how to increase participation in wellness programs. The key concept is based on principles of ‘WIFM’ or ‘*what’s in it for me?*’ The guide provides information to help employers determine what value a wellness program might have for the employees.

At the end of the guide, there is also an extensive list of resources to provide employers additional wellness-related information and support.

ABOUT THE TRANSAMERICA CENTER FOR HEALTH STUDIES®

[Transamerica Center for Health Studies®](#) (TCHS) – a division of [Transamerica Institute®](#), – is a national nonprofit focused on empowering consumers and employers to achieve the best value and protection from their health coverage, as well as the best outcomes in their personal health and wellness.

TCHS engages with the American public through national surveys, its website, research findings and consumer guidance. TCHS also collaborates with healthcare experts and organizations that are equally focused on health coverage and personal health and wellness.

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ABOUT THE INTERDISCIPLINARY CENTER FOR HEALTHY WORKPLACES (ICHW) AT UC BERKELEY

Founded in 2012 by industrial-organizational psychologists Cristina Banks and Sheldon Zedeck, [Berkeley's Interdisciplinary Center for Healthy Workplaces](#) serves as a hub for research and dialogue centered on improving the well-being and health of employees in their respective workplaces.

The center brings together scholars from related fields—including public health, public policy, environmental design, architecture, engineering, computer science, nutrition, law, and economics—to find holistic solutions to improve workplace environments. ICHW also works with outside experts, including clinicians, agency directors, consultants, and corporate executives. Since its inception, the Center has coordinated a series of meetings and advanced research into diverse topics, including the working conditions for white- and blue-collar workers and the impacts of “open” office design.