



# ESTABLISH AN EMPLOYEE WELLNESS PROGRAM FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Are you where you want and need to be when it comes to driving and promoting good health among your employees? We've put together this guide to help you do just that. With a significant increase in workplace wellness programs around the county, many individuals are making healthy lifestyle changes. Now you can put together a wellness program to help your local government employees get and stay healthy.

## Facing the issues

We understand the challenges local government may face when it comes to improving employee health:

- The average age and disease burden is higher in government than in other industries
  - Average age is 42.5, which is seven years older than other industries<sup>1</sup>
- Approximately 10% more individuals in government positions have a chronic condition compared to other industries<sup>1</sup>
- Hypertension, hyperlipidemia and diabetes are the most common chronic conditions in the government industry<sup>1</sup>

## The good news

Up to 70% of health care costs are the result of personal lifestyle choices which means many of these conditions can be prevented or more effectively managed with the right education, support and programs.<sup>2</sup>

When you consider the important role local government plays in society, keeping those who interact with the community in good health truly matters, not just for the organization, but for the future of the community.

A well-developed wellness program provides individuals with an integrated approach to improving their health, creates an environment that reduces exposure to health threats and incorporates health promotion into the culture of the municipal government.

## Implement a wellness program

### 1. Lay the foundation

- **Get the support of senior leaders**  
Talk to key individuals (e.g., board of supervisors, human resource/benefits department, stakeholders, bargaining entities, etc.). Learn the issues that most concern leadership such as health care cost, absenteeism, employee turnover and disability claims.
- **Determine core beliefs**  
Hold a core beliefs session to help define guiding principles on health benefits. Set expectations of health benefits, wellness promotion, incentives and indoor/outdoor group activities.
- **Consider your environment**  
The geographic and socioeconomic characteristics of your locality also are important considerations.
- **Establish a wellness committee**  
Recruit representatives from all areas and levels of

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your organization. Choose people with a variety of skills such as event organizers, motivators, data analysts and writers.

- **Do a needs assessment to guide your efforts**

A key to successful wellness programs is that measurable data is collected up front to determine health improvement opportunities based on what your employees might need and want.

Examples include:

- Health assessment, health screening data and medical/health care claims
- Survey questionnaire, focus groups with employees from different departments

## 2. Plan for success

- **Develop an operating plan**

An operating plan sets measurable goals and objectives to quantify success. This plan should include an implementation strategy, key dates, persons responsible, method of communication, promotion strategy, budget impacts and an evaluation plan.

- **Choose appropriate activities**

Numerous activities are appropriate for a local government wellness program. Consider the environment and culture. The wellness committee may find that multiple channels will help them reach the most employees.

- **Boost participation**

The following examples are important to promote employee participation.

- Get the active, public support of managers at all levels
- Implement a strategic incentive program
- Use multiple means of communication and repeat the message often

## 3. Build a culture of wellness

- Leadership should prominently proclaim that health is an important value and responsibility for the municipal government and its staff.
- Leadership at all levels should be accountable for facilitating a healthy work setting and rewarded for their success.
- Policies that support healthy practices should be implemented and enforced.
- Opportunities for exercise, such as lunchtime walking or running groups and access to the public gym facilities, should be provided before and after work and during breaks.

## 4. Evaluate

A successful wellness program adjusts to the changing needs of employees. Evaluation is a time when the committee can:

- Look at the methods that were the most or least successful
- Determine the most effective way to utilize resources, reach more people and measure the program's impact on health and health care spending
- Continue to consider new opportunities to get the entire municipal government engaged in the culture of well-being

## Summary

When individuals are healthy and more productive, the entire community will thrive. This guide can be valuable in developing a wellness program that will help local government employees embrace and benefit from a culture of health and well-being.

**Visit the Well at**  
**[Cigna.com/sites/healthpromotion/index.html](http://Cigna.com/sites/healthpromotion/index.html)**  
**for additional tools and resources for building a culture of well-being.**



**Please contact your Cigna sales partners for additional resources and assistance in supporting your wellness program initiatives.**



1. Cigna's Book of Business Data 2012

2. Whitmer, R.W., Pelletier, K.R., Anderson, D.R., Baase C.M., Frost, C.J. (2003) A wake up to corporate America. *J Occup Environ Med.* 45(9):916-25

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