

## Workplace Wellness: Why Promote Wellness?

**By Joan Flood, RHU**

*Account Executive*

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### What is Workplace Wellness?

Workplace wellness refers to the education and activities that a worksite may do to promote healthy lifestyles to employees and their families. Examples of wellness programming include such things as health education classes, subsidized use of fitness facilities, internal policies that promote healthy behavior, including incentives or changing the cafeteria or vending choices, health risk assessments, and any other activities, policies or environmental changes that affect the health of employees. Wellness programs can be simple or complex. Many programs require a minimal investment of time and money. More substantial programs often use more resources, but the many benefits to supporting and encouraging employee health and safety outweigh the costs.

### Why Workplace Wellness?

*It affects your company's bottom line in many ways.*

Here are three key factors:

- Decreased healthcare costs
- Increased productivity
- Better morale

Rising healthcare benefit costs are a significant concern and poor

health habits and unnecessary medical care costs consume portions of our corporate resources as well as the employee paycheck.

The worksite is an ideal setting for health promotion and disease prevention programs. Employees spend many of their waking hours at work, nearing 50 hours per week. That's why the workplace

*"An employee wellness program can raise awareness so employees with fewer risk factors remain in a lower-cost group. A program can also encourage employees with health risk factors to make lifestyle changes to improve their quality of life and lower costs"*

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is an ideal setting to address health/wellness issues.

### Why Start a Company Wellness Program?

*Wellness programs help control costs*

An investment in your employees' health may lower healthcare costs or slow the increase in providing that important benefit. In fact, employees with more risk factors, including being overweight, smoking and having diabetes, cost

more to insure and pay more for health care than people with fewer risk factors.

An employee wellness program can raise awareness so employees with fewer risk factors remain in a lower-cost group. A program can also encourage employees with health risk factors to make lifestyle changes to improve their quality of life and lower costs. The payoff in dollars as well as in quality of life can have a big impact on your company's bottom line.

### *Increase productivity*

Healthier employees are more productive. This has been demonstrated in factory settings and in office environments in which workers with workplace wellness initiatives miss less work. The risk of ill people coming to work and exposing their co-workers is reduced with a healthier workforce. Presenteeism, in which employees are physically present on the job but are not at their most productive or effective, is reduced in workplaces that have wellness programs.

### *Reduce absenteeism*

Healthier employees miss less work. Companies that support wellness and healthy decisions have a greater percentage of employees at work every day. Because health frequently carries over into better family choices,

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your employees may miss less work caring for ill family members as well. The cost savings of providing a wellness program can be measured against reduced overtime to cover absent employees and other aspects of absenteeism.

*Improve morale and enhanced image for the organization*

A company that cares about its employees' health is often seen as

a better place to work. Those companies save money by retaining workers who appreciate the benefit of a wellness program and they can attract new employees in a competitive market.

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improvements achieved by July 2007. Prior to the project, approximately 65% of AMI patients were being treated within 90 minutes. In the third quarter of 2007, on average, 89% of AMI patients were treated within 90 minutes.

At St. Peter, AMI patients are already experiencing better care. However, St. Peter should also begin to realize other benefits. In addition to improving their performance against other hospitals in the country, the change should lower St. Peter's adjusted mortality rate. Since some third party payers are either already paying hospitals for superior quality performance or are planning to do so, improvement in the AMI process may also have a direct impact on the bottom line.

For more information about this project, contact Kurt Miller, Heart Program Director, at [Kurt.Miller@providence.org](mailto:Kurt.Miller@providence.org) or Alan Messegee, Project Leader, at [Alan.Messegee@providence.org](mailto:Alan.Messegee@providence.org).

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