Worksite Wellness

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Purpose

The Worksite Wellness Policy provides the foundation for state entities to develop activities and modify work environments and policies to support the health and wellbeing of state employees. In addition to the benefits for employees, positive benefits are likely to accrue to families of employees, resulting in better health for families and the community.

Policy

In partnership with the Office of State Human Resources (OSHR) and the NC Department of Health and Human Services' Division of Public Health (DPH), each agency head has the responsibility to create and participate in a Worksite Wellness program within his or her own agency or university. The Worksite Wellness initiatives shall address the primary components of a healthy lifestyle including healthy eating, physical activity, tobacco use cessation, and stress management. The State Health Plan for Teachers and State Employees (SHP) and DPH have developed a Worksite Wellness model to assist agencies in the establishment of their programs.

Administration

OSHR and the DPH, with assistance from the Plan and other state government partners, will guide and assist agencies in the development of a comprehensive Worksite Wellness Program for State employees. The NC Health*Smart* Worksite Wellness Website, available at

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https://shp.nctreasurer.com/HealthandWellness/worksite_wellness/Pages/default.aspx will serve as a resource for administering and implementing the program.

Components

Wellness Leader: Each agency head shall designate a Wellness Leader at the management level who has direct access to the agency head. In collaboration with management and employees, this person is responsible for creating a Worksite Wellness infrastructure overseeing the development and implementation of employee wellness policies and committees, and providing ongoing assessment/monitoring of the effectiveness of Worksite Wellness Programs.

Advisory Note: Recommended criteria for agencies to use in selecting a Wellness Leader and a list of responsibilities for Wellness Leaders can be found at http://oshr.nc.gov/state-employee-resources/benefits/wellness/resources Leaders are responsible for completing annual Worksite Wellness Policy surveys and promoting completion of annual wellness survey of wellness committees and employees.

Wellness Committees: Each agency shall establish a wellness committee infrastructure. A wellness committee is a team of employees that meet formally and have identified aims, goals, and implementation strategies to encourage healthy behaviors at the workplace, advocate for policy change, and create
health-friendly work environments. A wellness committee should be comprised of employees who represent a cross section of the employee population. Multiple committees may be necessary depending on the size and number of locations of the agency.

Committee Chair(s) and Members Responsibilities: Committees should elect a wellness chair or co-chairs to conduct meetings and lead activities. Regarding time commitment, Committee members may need as much as four hours a month and the wellness chair(s) as much as six hours a month to plan and implement the agency's strategic wellness plan. (As appropriate, these activities should be included in an employee's work plan.)

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For more information on establishing committees, organizations are encouraged to use the NC HealthSmart Worksite Wellness Website found online at https://shp.nctreasurer.com/HealthandWellness/worksite_wellness/Pages/default.aspx .

POLICY GUIDELINES

I. Creating an Employee Workplace Wellness Infrastructure

(1) Measurable Wellness Program Objectives: Objectives should be included in each agency's strategic plan and in employee work plans, as appropriate. Wellness leaders should ensure that an annual wellness plan with measurable objectives is developed by the wellness committee(s) and progress on meeting those objectives is monitored at least annually.

(2) Financial Resources for Wellness Activities: Worksite Wellness programs should utilize available resources within State government and gratis/discounted services from the private sector as available. In addition, State agencies and the legislature may provide fiscal support for wellness committees and activities. Wellness committees should be aware of State Ethics Commission guidelines- http://www.ethicscommission.nc.gov/library/pdfs/Laws/EO24.pdf regarding employees in certain types of state positions receiving donated items. Some state agencies, due to the scope of their fiscal or judicial role, may not be able to solicit donations from the private sector. Donations or services should not be solicited or received from any entity that has a vendor, contractual, or pre-contractual relationship (bidding process) with a state agency/entity. Office of State Budget & Management (OSBM) approval will be needed by agencies to allocate funds for wellness programs.

The State of North Carolina Budget Manual section 6.1.8 specifies current guidelines for use of lapsed salaries for wellness activities and specific guidelines for how to use said funds. The Budget Manual is available online (https://ncosbm.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/documents/files/BudgetManual.pdf).

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(3) Computer Access: State agencies, to the extent possible, should make computers and email accounts available to employees in order to facilitate health education, increased participation in employee wellness surveys, and access to Employee Assistance Programs~~,~~ and Plan resources (i.e., NC HealthSmart Health Assessment tool).

(4) Communication and Promotion: State entities should promote, at all levels of the organization, their wellness initiatives as well as other

resources such as the State Health Plan for Teachers and State Employees, NC HealthSmart services and benefit changes, Employee Assistance Programs, the NC Tobacco Use Quitline (Quitline NC), ergonomics programs, and other wellness-related programs available to employees. New State employees should receive information about the NC HealthSmart healthy living initiative and the agency's worksite wellness program during orientation.

(5) Quality and Accessibility: State entities should have a plan for routinely monitoring the quality of wellness programs provided and employee access to programs across all work sites. The Statewide Wellness Coordinator will be responsible for designing a standard evaluation plan and assisting with discussing findings with the agency wellness leadership and staff. This is to ensure all employees receive the same level of services and supervisory support. State entities should provide flexibility within current policy guidelines to allow for and support participation in wellness activities.

(6) Liability Issues: The agency shall address liability issues depending on the nature of the wellness activity. Worksite wellness activities usually occur outside of work hours, for example, before and after work or at lunch time. Participation in wellness activities is voluntary; and, therefore, the State is not liable for injuries sustained to employees during their participation in these activities. As a general reference, injury that occurs during non-pay status is not compensable. Non-pay status is defined as before work, after work and non-paid time during the normal workday. State entities should inform employees of the above information.

The agency's Safety Officer should be involved in development of safety and maintenance guidelines for wellness areas to ensure that equipment and areas for wellness activities do not present hazardous

conditions. It is recommended that any fitness equipment, new or used,

with moveable parts be light commercial or commercial grade quality. Used equipment should be examined prior to use by a technician to ensure that it is functioning correctly. Routine maintenance of all equipment with moveable parts should be scheduled at least annually with a technician familiar with servicing fitness equipment.

(7) Sample Liability Release Forms and Signage Language: Liability release notification documents are available from the Office of State Human Resources at http://oshr.nc.gov/policies-forms/workplace-wellness/worksite-wellness. All employees shall be required to sign a "Wellness Activity Waiver Form" prior to participating in any worksite wellness activity/event that involves physical movement. This liability release form covers organized and individual wellness activities at the workplace as well as team or organized wellness events held off campus. Signed forms should be kept in personnel files. It is recommended that the liability release form be included in new employee orientation packets. Signs should be posted in exercise areas reminding employees that participation is at their own risk and that any unsafe conditions should be reported immediately to the designated agency contact. It is advised that directions for the safe use of equipment also be posted in the area.

II. Supporting Employee Participation in Wellness Activities

(1) Incentives: Incentives are recognized as an important part of an integrated health promotion and wellness program to encourage and reward behavior change. The Office of Management and Budget Manual stipulates specific guidelines related to fiscal support of wellness activities annually.

(2) Prizes: Drawings for prizes can be used to reward participation in

wellness activities. Items offered as donations from either internal or

external sources should comply with agency and State Ethics Commission guidelines.

Employees should be made aware of their IRS tax liability for any incentive and possibly for incentive items of significant value such as a gym membership received as a raffle prize. Incentive items of small value that are given infrequently are usually exempt.

(3) Fundraising: Wellness Committees throughout State government have permission to hold fund raising activities and solicit donations from vendors to support employee wellness programs that comply with State Ethics Commission guidelines. It is recommended that organizations establish an internal approval process or define guidelines for approved types of fundraising activities. Raffles should be limited to no more than two per year for each agency or university wellness committee.

(4) Wellness Program Fees: Wellness committees may charge employees to cover costs associated with providing wellness classes or programs. Wellness Committees charging employees for classes and program costs may, in addition to covering program costs, charge an additional amount that is refunded to participants upon completion of a program. In those situations, it is advised that wellness committees have participants sign a consent form outlining the requirements and procedures for obtaining a refund of any money paid. Any money should be handled by utilizing the agency's fiscal policies and in accordance with OSMB policy.

(5) Wellness Related Services Contributions: Contribution of services of value such as health related screenings should comply with current State Ethics Commission guidelines and be reviewed by the agency director and/or agency legal counsel prior to accepting these services.

(6) Wellness-related Vendors: State policy allows service providers, such as a weight management program, to offer programs to employees at the worksite during nonwork hours, i.e. during lunch hours, or before or after the official workday of the employee, with the permission of the agency head or designee. Wellness Programs should ensure that vendors providing wellness programs or services to employees have the recognized qualifications to provide such programs.

See https://www.shpnc.gov/wellness/worksite-wellness for guidance on selecting qualified vendors and responding to vendor solicitations. Wellness committees using funds from fund raising efforts or participant receipts are not required to use the state bid or contractual process in the selection of wellness vendors providing occasional wellness programs or activities for employees. State employees paid directly by other employees to provide occasional wellness classes during non-work hours are not considered as engaged in secondary employment. See https://oshr.nc.gov/hr-governance/secondary-employment-policy.

III. Increasing Employee Levels of Physical Activity in the Workplace

Activity Space: Designation of space for wellness activities, including exercise, in state owned and leased office space is permissible and encouraged.

Permission to use designated office space in leased or state owned property for a wellness or fitness area must be requested from the Office of State Property, Department of Administration (DOA). Current statutes do not address the use of office space for wellness activities. Empty office space may be used on a temporary basis without permission. Approval from DOA is not required to include fitness areas as part of multi-use space such as storage, workrooms, or break areas.

IV. Improving Access to Healthier Food in the Workplace

(1) Vending and Food Service: State entities are encouraged to make available healthy snacks/foods at catered events, in vending machines, in cafeterias, and in snack bars. For example, provide at least 15 to 20 percent healthier snacks in machines. Clear identification of healthy snacks is strongly encouraged.

(2) Food Storage and Preparation: Environmental accommodations for food preparation and storage (e.g. sinks, refrigerators, microwaves) are encouraged to support employees in bringing healthy lunches and snacks to work.

(3) Voluntary Food and Beverages at work related events: Worksite Wellness Leaders should encourage its members to make every effort to offer healthy options at meetings and work related social gatherings if food and beverages are brought in by employees as a part of the event. "Guidelines for Healthy Foods and Beverages at Meetings, Gatherings, and Events" can be found at http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/HealthyMeetingGuide/HealthyMeetingGuide.html

V. Reducing and Managing Stress in the Work Place

(1) Stress Reduction and Management Training: Agencies should facilitate or provide stress reduction and management training annually to managers and supervisors to improve their supervisory skills and to reduce conflict and stress in the work place. Training should also be offered to employees who want to improve their time management and stress reduction skills. Agency leadership should strongly encourage management and employees to take advantage of these resources. Wellness committees should include stress management programs as an ongoing component of their wellness program.

(2) Breaks and Lunch Time: State agencies are encouraged to ensure that employees are receiving time for lunch and for appropriate breaks from repetitive and stressful work functions during the workday to help prevent stress and injury.

VI. Supporting Tobacco Cessation

(1) State Laws Prohibiting Tobacco Use in Worksites: Ensuring employees understand and abide by these laws is an effective way to help those trying to quit tobacco use. Promoting cessation resources and offering cessation programs is highly recommended. Under NC General Statute law, smoking is currently prohibited in state government buildings; academic and medical facility campuses; state vehicles; schools; prisons; and long-term care facilities. The UNC system prohibits smoking within 100 linear feet of state owned or leased property. UNC Chapel Hill and East Carolina Medical centers prohibit smoking on all grounds

and walkways. The law also requires the person in charge of buildings and grounds to post signs stating that smoking is prohibited.

(2) Tobacco Cessation Programs: Agencies and their Wellness Committees should routinely promote tobacco cessation resources and benefits available through Quitline NC, applicable Employee Assistance Programs (EAP), and the State Health Plan. For tobacco use cessation:

a.) Quitline NC: 1-800-QUIT-NOW. (1-800-784-8669). Offers free and confidential support from trained quit coaches 24 hours per day- 7 days a week to all NC youth and adults who want to quit using tobacco.

b.) State Health Plan for Teachers and State Employees' Benefits: Plan members are offered in-person counseling with a doctor or behavioral therapist. All tobacco cessation prescription medications are offered at a reduced cost. In addition, free nicotine replacement patches are available to members enrolled in the multi-call program with Quitline NC. Plan members who want more information on these and other tobacco cessation resources are encouraged to visit www.shpnc.org.

c.) Employee Assistance Services (EAP): Most state agencies and universities provide EAP services for their employees and family members. Employees should contact their agency or university Human Resource Office to find out if EAP services are available.