

Creating a Wellness Council

□ **Step One: Management Support and Participation**

One of the most important factors in the success of a Wellness Council is the extent and nature of support given to the council by senior management. It is difficult for a program to be successful without visible support from the top. Senior management support can come in many different forms, including participation in planning, budget approval, communicating support to all employees, and participating as role models in events. Establishing by-laws, like the example in Appendix A, gives credibility to the council and clarity of the support of upper management.

□ **Step Two: Diverse Representation**

By including council members that represent the diversity of your workforce at all different levels and across many different departments, you'll be better able to anticipate the health needs that are unique to certain groups. You'll also be able to modify or customize program implementation strategies to make programs accessible to all employees, regardless of differences.

□ **Step Three: Creation of a Wellness Program Name & Brand**

Once you have been able to identify individuals that are interested in becoming a part of the Wellness Council, begin by brainstorming ideas for a wellness name and brand. Just like your company's name and brand, your health management program will benefit from being easily recognizable to employees. Consistently using your program's name on all communications from the health management program and Wellness Council conveys to employees that this program is here to stay. Employees may be more likely to participate if they perceive that the program is an important and ongoing part of your company. You can ultimately have the Wellness Council agree on ideas or you can also involve the entire company by asking for their input as well. Refer to Appendix B for different ideas to get the creative juices flowing!

□ **Step Four: Employee and Organizational Needs Assessments**

Health promotion through the Wellness Council works if programs are planned properly and based upon solid data. Survey employees about their needs and interests, and build your plan around that information (refer to the Health Management Needs & Interest Survey template). You'll also want to look at the physical environment in your workplace to determine if it supports health (refer to Environmental Assessment template). Check the lighting, ventilation, temperature, workstation design, noise levels, appeal of work areas, contents of vending machines/cafeterias, office equipment, and safety equipment.

Once these first four steps are complete, councils are encouraged to accomplish additional steps, which can be completed in any order. The more steps a council completes, the more likely it is to be successful long-term. But don't feel overwhelmed. Take your time to finish these additional steps!

Additional Steps

□ **Step Five: Integration into Organizational Structure**

Integrating health promotion into the organizational structure of your company will ensure its future and continued success. Wellness Councils are most successful when aligned with the business goals and practices of the agency. Three key components can help you integrate a Wellness Council into your organization:

- Develop a mission and vision
- Focus on an overall goal
- Cooperate and integrate with other divisions in your agency

□ **Step Six: Operating Plan**

Developing an operating plan challenges your company to adopt the Wellness Council and creates legitimacy for the council within the organization. Your plan should include an overall goal, and clear, measurable objectives.

□ **Step Seven: Employee Feedback and Ownership**

When employees know and feel that the Wellness Council is “theirs” they will be more likely to participate and continue involvement. By actively communicating with employees regarding the council’s response to their needs and interests, you are creating a supportive environment for health promotion and behavior change.

□ **Step Eight: Organizational Policies**

Your Wellness Council should work to implement policies that support employees taking advantage of the Wellness Council and health management programs. Examples of these policies include health related policies such as smoking, exercise release time, management policies to reduce stress, healthy food policies, and time-off for preventive exams.

□ **Step Nine: Health Promotion as Part of the Strategic Plan**

Inclusion of the Wellness Council in the strategic plan of the company validates the long-term commitment of the organization to employee health. It also acknowledges commitment to continuous improvement is necessary and desirable if overall goals are to be accomplished. Without this long-term commitment to employee health, employees will be less successful in initiating behavior change and maintaining changes over a long period of time.

Appendix A

Example By-Laws

Establishing Wellness Council by-laws gives credibility to the group and clarity of the support by senior management.

Company ABC Wellness Council By-Laws

I. Authority and Name

The ABC Company established the XYZ Wellness Council.

II. Mission Statement

The XYZ Wellness Council functions to enhance and foster the health and well-being of the ABC Company employees.

III. Wellness Brand or Logo

Insert sample logo here.

IV. Membership

- a. *Eligibility:* Members must work for ABC Company and maintain an interest in worksite wellness.
- b. *Obligations of Membership:*
 - i. Members must share a commitment to the mission and goals of the organization.
 - ii. Members must be willing to accept duties on assigned projects.
 - iii. Members must be able to serve as co-chair, which rotates annually.

V. Organizational Structure

- a. *Composition:* Membership will include two co-chairs and ten members.
- b. *Co-chair Responsibilities:*
 - i. Attend and conduct all meetings.
 - ii. Oversee the planning of agendas for all meetings and the creation of committees.
 - iii. Notify members of meetings ten days in advance.
 - iv. Coordinate the documentation of meeting minutes and distribute them to members within ten days.
 - v. Act as a spokesperson for the group, advancing the purpose and positions of the XYZ Wellness Council through every appropriate means possible.
 - vi. Work with Human Resources and Division Directors to make committee member or replacement appointments as needed.
 - vii. Submit or oversee the submission of initiative proposals to Human Resources and/or Executive Management.
- c. *Member Responsibilities:*
 - i. Attend and participate in all meetings, or send a representative as necessary.
 - ii. Assist in the planning and implementation of council initiatives and projects.
 - iii. Promote council efforts among division staff.
 - iv. Perform other duties as requested by the co-chairs.
 - v. If unwilling or unable to actively participate as a XYZ Wellness Council member, assist co-chairs and division director with finding a replacement.

VI. Goals

- a. Advise Executive Management Team on the development of worksite wellness activities that improve or maintain the physical, social, emotional, occupational, and environmental health of employees.
- b. Secure approval from Human Resources and/or Executive Management Team on suggested strategies.
- c. Assess, plan, implement, and evaluate (as appropriate) various activities, policies, and environmental supports that encourage and facilitate the health and well-being of ABC Company employees.

VII. Strategies

- a. Identify gaps in current wellness programming and services and prioritize wellness needs through assessments.
 - i. Conduct Employee Health & Interest Wellness Needs Survey
 - ii. Conduct a Cultural Assessment
- b. Recommend or take actions that will improve employee wellness.
- c. Follow up to assure appropriate action has been taken.
- d. Evaluate outcomes and recommend modifications to Executive Management Team as needed.
- e. Prepare an annual report for Executive Management Team.
- f. Present various project findings at quarterly status meetings.

Appendix B

Ideas on How to Name a Health Management Program & Create a Logo

Do what you can to engage employees in naming the program. Not only are they more likely to accept the name, but it's a great way to announce to employees the organization's commitment to employee health. Here are two approaches to involving employees in naming the health management program.

Option 1: Have a contest to name your health management program

1. Announce a contest.
2. Review the ideas submitted, and choose a name.

If, for example, your company Premier Building and Design is in the commercial construction business, you might receive the following ideas from employees:

Cornerstone: Feeling well is what it's all about
Premier Elements: Building healthier employees
Custom Build: Building health builds wealth
Building Health: Designing better employee health

After reviewing the entries, your Wellness Council determines that it likes the name "Premier Elements" and the subtitle "Building health builds wealth". Your Wellness Council awards the "name the program contest" prize to the two employees, those who submitted the pieces of the name that represent the final product. Ex: *Premier Elements: Building health builds wealth*

3. Choose a logo to go with the name.

The logo is an important piece of the branding:

- Review any ideas submitted for logos.
- If you're fortunate to have a graphic design professional at your company, enlist her or his help with developing the logo!
- As an alternative, choose a piece of clipart that fits with the name you've selected. For example, the company referenced above might look for a symbol that conveys building, health, and wealth.

Option 2: Wellness Council names the health management program

1. Have your Wellness Council brainstorm names.
 - a. To get ideas flowing, ask members to write down all wellness words and words associated with your organization or industry.
 - b. Try clustering words together as in the construction company example above.
2. Once your Wellness Council has narrowed down the possibilities to about three ideas, have members vote to select the name of your health management program.
3. Choose a logo to go with the winning name.
4. Announce the program with its new name and explain that employees on the Wellness Council chose the name.

References

Healthy Utah, Utah Department of Health, Wellness Council Toolkit: Building a Healthy Environment. Website: www.healthyutah.org/councils, 2006.

BlueCross BlueShield of Minnesota. Website: www.bluecrossmn.com/preventionminnesota, 2012.