

At-a-glance: Creating a culture of health and well-being



Creating a culture of health and well-being is a key component of a successful worksite well-being program. Below are some important steps to building and cultivating a health-promoting, supportive culture.

What is it?

While the meaning of “culture of health and well-being” may differ from company to company, Optum® defines it as a “work environment where employees have resources, tools and a support system that empowers and motivates them to take responsibility for their own health.”¹

Why create it?

The 3 primary benefits of building a culture of health and well-being are closely linked to the following:²

- May lead to a reduction in both direct and indirect health care costs
- May help to create a more productive and safer workforce
- Support greater employee engagement, retention, trust and satisfaction

How to create it

Leadership commitment and involvement (at all levels)

“Leaders” need to act as role models to create and reinforce the culture. This can be accomplished when leaders consistently do the following:

- Assist with the creation of a supportive, health-promoting environment
- Communicate about the well-being initiative and why it is important to them, the employees and the organization
- Actively participate in the well-being program
- Educate and motivate **all** levels of leadership on the positive role they can play to support wellness initiatives

Company practices, policies and embedded with well-being

To be effective, a culture of health and well-being needs to be integrated into the day-to-day operations of the organization. Implement policies and practices that promote and support employee well-being. Sample “supportive” policies include:

- A “Healthy Meeting Policy” to ensure healthier foods and beverages are available at meetings and company events
- Flexible work schedule
- Offer reimbursement for offsite fitness facilities
- Provide signage to encourage physical activity (e.g., “Take the Stairs”)

A workplace environment that supports healthy decisions

It is important to have a workplace environment that supports healthy decisions... make the healthy choice the valued and easier choice. Environmental supports include:

- Ensure employees have access to affordable, healthy foods
- Encourage employees to be more physically active by offering movement breaks throughout the day or map out nearby walking routes
- Create areas for employees to relax and de-stress
- Sponsor or organize social events throughout the year

¹ Creating a culture of health at work: Investigating the Keys to a Successful Health and Wellness Strategy, White Paper, Optum, Inc., 2018.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Division of Population Health, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Workplace Health Model. <http://www.cdc.gov/workplacehealthpromotion/model/index.html>. Accessed October 2020.