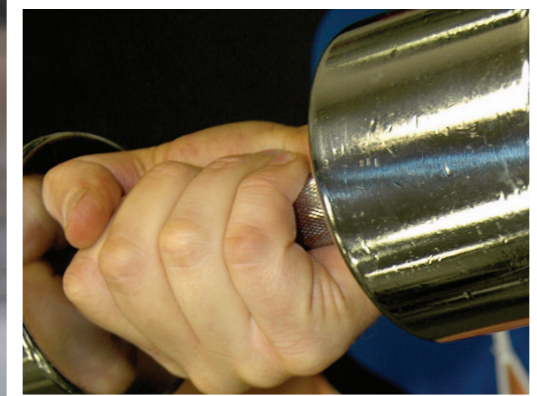


THE SURGEON GENERAL'S CALL TO ACTION

TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH AND WELLNESS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

AN EMPLOYER RESOURCE FOR IMPLEMENTING AN ACCESSIBLE HEALTH AND WELLNESS PROGRAM



ABOUT THE SURGEON GENERAL'S CALL TO ACTION TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH AND WELLNESS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The Surgeon General, the Nation's top public health officer, is appointed by the President of the United States to help protect and promote the health of the Nation. The Surgeon General, a physician, provides the American people with the latest scientific information about how to improve their health and reduce their risk for illness or injury.

When a health topic warrants special attention, the Surgeon General may issue a national call to action. The 2005 Surgeon General's Call to Action to Improve the Health and Wellness of Persons with Disabilities highlights the simple principle that good health is necessary for persons with disabilities to secure the freedom to work, learn, and participate in their families and communities through four goals.

The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Improve the Health and Wellness of Persons with Disabilities highlights the simple principle that good health is necessary for persons with disabilities to secure the freedom to work, learn, and participate in their families and communities. The Call to Action identifies four specific goals for the Nation to improve the health and wellness of persons with disabilities.

"As a physician, I have learned people with disabilities are no different from everyone else. Each one of us has a role to play in keeping the message of the Call to Action alive. With good health, persons with disabilities can learn, work, love, and live long, productive and active lives. Because health is for all of us – whether we have a disability or not."

– Margaret Giannini, MD, FAACP, Director, HHS Office on Disability

About this Resource for Employers

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office on Disability (OD) and the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Programs (ODEP) of the U.S. Department of Labor agree that attracting and retaining qualified employees and helping them stay healthy and on the job is in every employer's best interest. This Employer Resource highlights key issues related to health and wellness promotion for persons with disabilities found in the complete Call to Action To Improve the Health and Wellness of Persons with Disabilities. It was developed collaboratively by the OD and ODEP to provide employers with an introduction to developing and implementing health and wellness programs and services in the workplace that are accessible to all employees, including those with disabilities.

Four Goals for the Nation

- Goal 1:** People nationwide understand that persons with disabilities can lead long, healthy, productive lives.
- Goal 2:** Health care providers have the knowledge and tools to screen, diagnose and treat the whole person with a disability with dignity.
- Goal 3:** Persons with disabilities can promote their own good health by developing and maintaining healthy lifestyles.
- Goal 4:** Accessible health care and support services promote independence for persons with disabilities.

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HEALTH AND WELLNESS AT THE WORKSITE: THE BUSINESS CASE

Global competition, rising health care costs, and an increased demand for highly skilled, productive workers have led many employers to increase resources devoted to maintaining the health and productivity of their workforce. In an effort to contain costs, companies of all sizes are seeking to both prevent the onset of illness and disability, as well as manage conditions once they occur.

Accessible employer-sponsored health and wellness programs are emerging as important elements in improving the health of working-age individuals and their families as well as creating and sustaining a productive work environment for all employees. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, from 1999 to 2005 access to employer provided wellness programs rose from 17 percent to 23 percent.¹ Employers believe these programs and services may help recruit qualified and talented employees, increase employee retention rates, and decrease absenteeism and health care costs to the company.

Jerry Ripperger, director of consumer health for the Principal Financial Group, states that “employees

What is Health and Wellness?

Health promotion focuses on heightening awareness and enhancing prevention. This is broadly defined, but not limited to, enabling individuals to increase control over and improve their health. Health promotion is the science and art of helping people change their lifestyle to move toward a state of optimal health. Optimal health is defined as a balance of physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and intellectual health. Lifestyle change can be facilitated through a combination of efforts to enhance awareness, change behavior, and create environments that support good health practices. Of the three, supportive environments will probably have the greatest impact in producing lasting change.

Health improvement programs include several approaches that are both behavioral and clinical. Behavioral interventions focus on reducing unhealthy lifestyle choices, such as smoking, poor nutrition, and lack of physical activity. Clinical interventions include identifying and treating illnesses in their early stages when health can be dramatically improved and costly complications avoided.

Building on the above definitions, health promotion initiatives are defined as those that integrate components of health promotion and disease prevention (i.e. smoking cessation, stress management, lipid reduction, etc.) into a coherent program that includes evaluation and is consistent with corporate objectives.²

consistently rate health insurance as the most important workplace benefit and at the same time say it's a benefit they would like to see their company improve... Wellness benefits are one way to meet employee demands by giving them more control over health related decisions”³

In any industry the health of the workforce is critical to the company's bottom line, as well as to the quality of service provided to customers. Dealing proactively with health issues through wellness initiatives that promote healthy lifestyle choices is a positive approach to reducing absenteeism, work-related injuries and health-related productivity issues. It is an area with great promise for helping employers gain more control over their health care costs.⁴

In the *2004 National Business Group on Health (NBGH) Comprehensive Guide to Designing, Implementing, and Evaluating Worksite Programs*, NBGH researchers identified the following cost savings when implementing health programs:

- Return on investment of at least \$3 to \$8 per dollar invested within 5 years of program implementation
- \$3.48 in reduced health care costs and \$5.82 in lower absenteeism costs per dollar invested

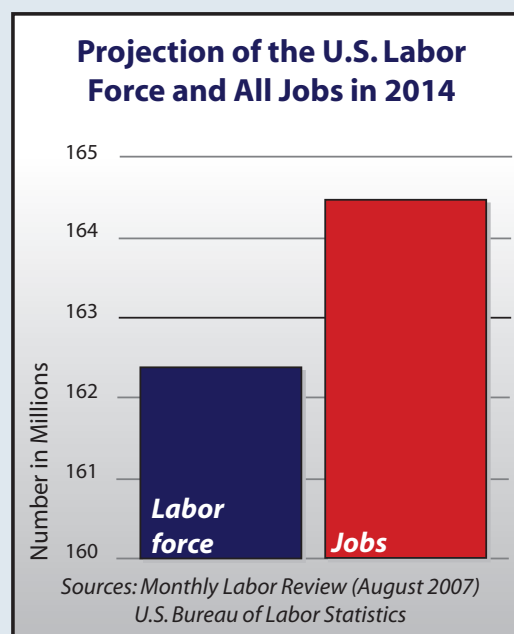
Additionally, the *2005 Principal Financial Group Well-being Index Survey* found:

- 47 percent of workers surveyed agree wellness benefits encourage them to work harder and even perform better
- 48 percent of workers said wellness offerings would encourage them to stay in their current employment situation

The Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM) reports that workplace wellness programs result in “enhanced morale, higher employee job satisfaction and less absenteeism and presenteeism (at work but with a lack of focus or productivity).”⁵

Stats & Facts

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Monthly Labor Review (August 2007) the growth rate of the labor force is slowing, but the job rate is growing. The potential gap between available employees and jobs is projected to exceed 2.4 million. For companies looking to attract and retain the best-qualified workers, employer-sponsored health programs and services could provide the advantage.



EMPLOYER RECOMMENDATIONS

When employers understand their workforce and their available resources, there is an opportunity to improve productivity by offering health and wellness benefits that fit into any business model. To better understand what “best practices” employers are currently implementing, the OD and ODEP convened a group of respected employers who have a track record of employing people with disabilities and who offer a range of wellness and health benefits. Employment researchers joined the discussion and offered analysis of current workplace health trends and practices.

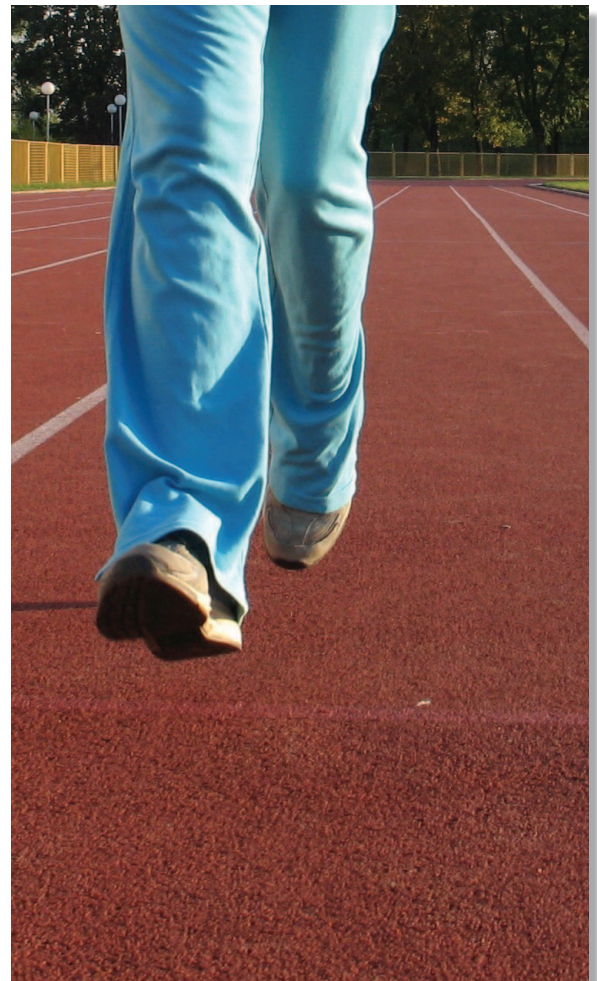
Employers identified the following common themes for establishing health and wellness programs in the workplace:

- Incorporate health and wellness messages into the business’ mission statement
- Be responsive to employees health needs and lifestyles
- Encourage personal ownership of health status
- Design programs to be accessible to all employees

The recommendations and examples offered by employers can be adapted and implemented to fit the needs and resources of small, medium, and large companies.

The group offered valuable advice from their own experiences. Representatives from Target Corporation reported improving pregnancy benefits after hearing the need from team members. “Remaining competitive is key, and the wellness program is a benefit as well as an incentive to recruit and maintain employees,” said Steve Lafferty, Target Corporation. “We want to make it easier for all team members and their families to get and stay healthy.”

Making wellness a key component of a company’s mission statement or core competencies helps set the tone throughout the organization. “In our mission statement we included that as a company we want everyone to strive for their own personal optimal



Stats & Facts

Employers have traditionally viewed “medical costs” as largely separate from productivity or “indirect costs” such as absenteeism, disability and presenteeism. However, there is little question that non-occupational illness and injury have a significantly greater impact on productivity, morbidity, mortality, and health related costs than occupational injury and illness.⁷

health, because different continuums of health exist for different people” reported Patti Clavier of Intel Corporation. Shelia Newman, President of New Editions Consulting, Inc. a small business, said “I chose a health care plan that served everyone in the company and let the company continue to grow. There are ways to look at what you are providing your employees and there are ways to think outside the box to help enhance care.” From Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, Kevin Nauer said “Highmark has two wellness centers and two trainers with autism. We have chair users doing strength training... when this becomes a part of your programs it becomes obvious everyone is involved.”

Quotables

“Keeping America well so America can continue to progress. That is the issue within business. If you need to keep any member of your workforce on the job and healthy, you need to keep all members of your workforce healthy and on the job.”

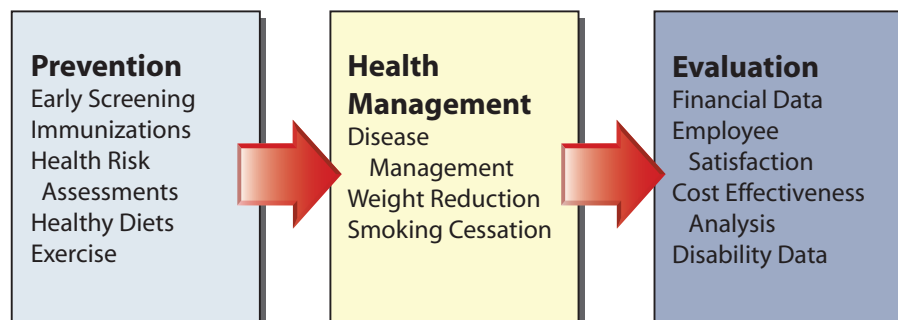
– *Neil Romano*

As far as making those programs accessible, Jim Salzano of Clarks Companies, North America pointed out that “accessibility improves productivity for all employees, regardless of their disability status, and productivity has a direct impact on a company’s bottom line.”

Universal design, the concept of making programs, facilities and plans accessible to anyone, was a trend several participants mentioned as the best way to build in accessibility. “We have 10,000 employees with an extensive employee health program. Activities are constantly being offered to all employees, and can be made department specific. We use universal design so the programs are applicable to the entire population. Preventative medicine is going to help employers save thousands of dollars, regardless of how they insure themselves. The things we do today are being done in other venues because the bottom line is to keep employees healthy and at work,” said Susan Franer, Cincinnati Children’s Hospital.

Finally, the group identified vendor relationships as an additional way to encourage accessibility of health and wellness programs. They suggested providing managers and vendors with an accessibility checklist to remind them that programs offered internally or procured should be designed to be available to all eligible users. Steve Lafferty of Target said, “Things can change by companies making the demand for it.”

Health Improvement Continuum⁶



GETTING STARTED - WHAT ANY EMPLOYER CAN DO

Health and wellness programs and services in the workplace are largely dependent on the size of the business, the demographic of the workforce population, and the amount of resources available for the creation and implementation of a program. However, small, medium, and large businesses all have an opportunity to engage in accessible workplace health and wellness programs that are manageable and beneficial to employers and employees alike.



When developing and implementing strategies for accessible employer-sponsored health promotion programs, it is important to view the workforce holistically. Integrating accessibility into all employer-sponsored activities increases the health and productivity of the entire workforce, not just employees with disabilities.

Workplace health and wellness benefits may occur across the spectrum of health promotion activities, fitting the needs of small, medium, and large employers. Benefits may be as simple as flexible scheduling to allow employees to make and attend medical appointments, providing encouragement and/or incentives to quit smoking or lose weight, or as sophisticated as onsite health services and physical activity centers.

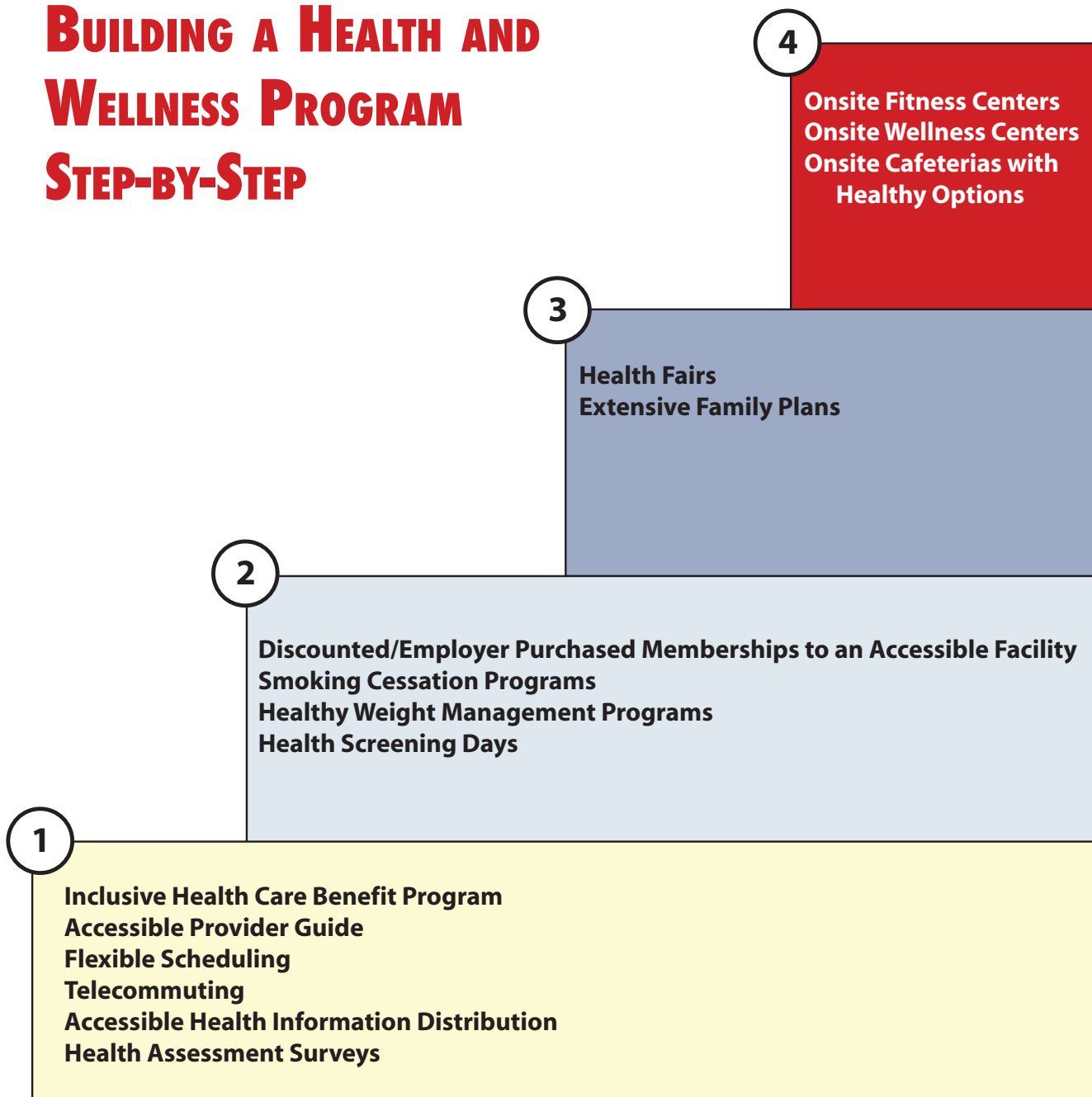
Preliminary research suggests, and employers agree, that it is best to base activities on individual business's resources and employee population, allowing small, medium, and large businesses an opportunity to contribute to the health and wellbeing of their workforces in a fiscally responsible manner that reflects their unique organizational culture.

The First Five Steps

1. Seek investment from the highest level of company leadership.
2. Gain an in-depth understanding of your workforce, including their health status and wellness needs. This may be accomplished through volunteer employee advisory groups, voluntary employee surveys or employee focus groups.
3. Include accessible health and wellness language in the company's mission statement.
4. Ensure accessible design from the outset by including employees with disabilities in the creation, development, and design of health and wellness programs and services.
5. Utilize the accessibility checklist to ensure accessibility of worksite and vendor programs and services.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS SERVICES ACROSS THE SPECTRUM FOR SMALL, MEDIUM, AND LARGE BUSINESSES

BUILDING A HEALTH AND WELLNESS PROGRAM STEP-BY-STEP



CHECKLIST FOR EMPLOYERS AND VENDORS

As an employer, you may know a good deal about the accessibility of your physical plant but many employee benefits and services are provided through external vendors. How will you know if those services are accessible?

The following checklist is meant to assist employers in developing and implementing worksite health and wellness programs and in evaluating the accessibility of vendors' related services and programs. By incorporating the following items at a program's inception, employers can ensure all employees, regardless of their disability status, can access health and wellness programs and services. The checklist addresses common physical and communication accessibility issues.

What is Accessibility?

Accessibility means that people of all ages and abilities can enter and function within your facilities. Physical accessibility refers to the design and layout of a facility, and communication accessibility focuses on the way information is delivered through signage, materials, technology, and interpersonal exchanges.

Physical Accessibility

Use this portion of the checklist to identify potential barriers and challenges to an employee's physical access to programs and services offered as part of the employer-sponsored health and wellness programs. The issues highlighted in this section are applicable to the worksite and anywhere services or programs are provided to employees through the program (i.e., gyms, health and wellness fairs, clinics).



Communication Accessibility

Use this portion of the checklist to identify potential barriers and challenges to an employee's access to information offered as part of the employer-sponsored health and wellness programs. The issues highlighted in this section are applicable to information generated by employers and vendors for employees (i.e., health screening surveys, health information pamphlets). This checklist addresses accessibility for those with low or no vision, people who are hard of hearing or deaf, and others with cognitive limitations who may benefit from materials available in formats other than standard print.



CHECKLIST FOR PHYSICAL ACCESS TO HEALTH AND WELLNESS PROGRAMS

	Yes	No	Proposed Solution
Program Design Employees, including those with physical impairments, are included in an advisory capacity when designing/selecting wellness programs.			
Accessible Parking An adequate number of accessible parking spaces are available in near proximity to an accessible entrance.			
Accessible Approach/Entrance At least one route of travel to the entrance and through the facility is accessible for all employees, including employees with disabilities.			
Access to Programs/Services The layout of the worksite/off-site health and wellness location allows all employees to access the program and service benefits without limitation.			
Accessible Equipment Health and wellness equipment, including physical activity devices, medical equipment, screening tools, etc., used at the worksite and off location are accessible to all employees.			
Accessible Service Acquisition Vendors provide program and service supports that are accessible to all employees.			
Usability of Rest Rooms/Locker Rooms Rest rooms/locker rooms are accessible to all employees.			
Additional Access Amenities such as drinking fountains, pay phones, cafeterias, and personal trainers are accessible to all employees.			
Special Events Wellness fairs and special events to promote a healthy workforce are located in an area accessible to employees and/or family members who may use mobility aids.			
Accessible Providers Health care providers administering services through the health and wellness program are trained to accommodate the health care needs of employees with disabilities and are knowledgeable of resources to assist with providing accessible and appropriate care.			

CHECKLIST FOR COMMUNICATION ACCESS TO HEALTH AND WELLNESS PROGRAMS

	Yes	No	Proposed Solution
Program Design Employees, including those with sensory impairments, are included in an advisory capacity when designing/selecting wellness programs.			
Accessible Information Health and wellness messages are created and delivered in a way that is accessible and easily understandable by all employees including those with sensory or cognitive disabilities.			
Alternate Formats Health and wellness information is available in multiple formats to ensure access for all employees, as needed. Resources for creating alternate formats such as large print, disc versions in text only format, and Braille are available to trained staff. Sign language interpreters are available if needed.			
Accessible Information Acquisition Vendors provide information accessible to all employees in multiple formats. This may include text only versions of print materials provided on disk or open-captioned versions of videos. Vendors will be asked to provide sign language interpreters for live presentations as requested.			
Web-based Information Benefits information provided primarily via websites is accessible to employees with screen readers.			
Special Events Assistive aides or services are provided as necessary to allow employees and/or family members to fully participate in wellness fairs and special events.			
Accessible Providers Health care providers administering services through health and wellness programs are trained to accommodate communication needs for employees with disabilities and are knowledgeable of assistive aids and services to assure communication.			

This checklist is an introduction to accessibility considerations for employers, but is not a comprehensive document. For complete accessibility information or to learn more about what your company can do to ensure accessibility for all employees, please visit the Disability and Business Technical Assistance Center website: <http://www.adata.org/> for free information. Resources include a Guide for Accessible Temporary Events which can be useful when planning health fairs, races and other activities.

ADVANCING THE CALL TO ACTION

The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Improve the Health and Wellness of Persons with Disabilities was developed to expand public knowledge about the tools and resources available and what is still needed to support persons with disabilities as they promote their own health and wellness. The Call to Action is designed to help America rethink health and wellness for persons with disabilities as we know it today.

Employers can play an active role in advancing The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Improve the Health and Wellness of Persons with Disabilities by implementing accessible workplace programs. In providing a supportive environment for all employees to establish healthier lifestyles and behavior choices, employers can make a positive contribution to the health and wellness of the Nation. This is a call to every employer to join with the Surgeon General in a national effort to promote the health and wellness of all persons, including those with disabilities.



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Office of Disability
Employment Policy

REFERENCES

The data, facts, and suggestions presented here come from the Surgeon General's Call to Action to Improve the Health and Wellness of Persons with Disabilities and the following sources:

^{1,5} Potempa, A and Ritter, S. "Designing an Effective Wellness Program, Step by Step." Compensation and Benefits Library, Society for Human Resource Management. www.shrm.org/rewards/library_published/benefits/nonIC/CMS_019968.asp. January 2007.

^{2,6,7} National Business Group on Health. "Health Improvement: A Comprehensive Guide to Designing, Implementing, and Evaluating Worksite Programs." www.businessgrouphealth.org/pdfs/issuebrief_nov2004.pdf. Volume 1, Number 1, November 2004.

³ Principal Financial Group. "Making Wellness Work- Employees Respond to Wellness Benefits and Stay on the Job." www.principal.com/about/news/2006/wellbeingwellness013106.htm. January 31, 2006.

⁴ IndustryWeek. "The Win-Win of Wellness in the Workplace." www.industryweek.com. January 2008.

⁸ National Center for Access Unlimited. "Achieving Physical and Communication Accessibility." References for the Americans with Disabilities Act. Washington, DC, 1991.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine

<http://www.acoem.org/>

Disability and Business Technical Assistance Centers

<http://www.adata.org/>

Improving Health: An Employer Toolkit

<http://www.iom.edu/CMS/3788/18021/26995/35482.aspx>

Job Accommodation Network

<http://www.jan.wvu.edu/>

National Business Group on Health

<http://www.wbgh.com/>

Health Improvement: A Comprehensive Guide to Designing, Implementing, and Evaluating Worksite Programs

http://www.businessgrouphealth.org/pdfs/issuebrief_nov2004.pdf

Employer Toolkits

<http://www.wbgh.org/benefitstopics/toolkits.cfm>

The New Freedom Initiative's Online Resource for Americans with Disabilities

<http://www.disabilityinfo.gov/>

The Principal Financial Group Well-Being Index

<http://www.principal.com/wellbeing/index.htm>

The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Improve the Health and Wellness of Persons with Disabilities

<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/disabilities/>

United States Department of Health and Human Services Office on Disability

<http://www.hhs.gov/od/>

United States Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy

<http://www.dol.gov/odep/>

United States Access Board

<http://www.access-board.gov/>

Office on Disability (OD)

The Secretary of Health and Human Services created the Office on Disability (OD) in October 2002. The Director of the Office reports to the Secretary and serves as an advisor on HHS activities relating to disabilities. The Office on Disability oversees the implementation and coordination of disability programs, policies and special initiatives for 54 million persons with disabilities. The HHS Office on Disability oversees the coordination, development and implementation of programs and special initiatives within HHS that impact people with disabilities. The Office serves as the focal point within HHS for the implementation and coordination of policies, programs, and special initiatives related to disabilities with the Department and with other Federal agencies; oversees the implementation and coordination of disability programs, policies, and special initiatives; heightens the interaction of programs within HHS and with Federal, State, community and valuable private sector partners; supports plans and initiatives designed to tear down barriers facing people with disabilities, which prevent them from fully participating and contributing in an inclusive community life; centralizes the solutions outlined in the New Freedom Initiative, and increases focus and awareness to help Americans living with disabilities.



Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)

The Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) was authorized by Congress in the Department of Labor's FY 2001 appropriation. Recognizing the need for a national policy to ensure that people with disabilities are fully integrated into the 21st Century workforce, the Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao delegated authority and assigned responsibility to the Assistant Secretary for Disability Employment Policy. ODEP is a sub-cabinet level policy agency in the Department of Labor. The Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) provides national leadership on disability employment policy by developing and influencing the use of evidence-based disability employment policies and practices, building collaborative partnerships, and delivering authoritative and credible data on employment of people with disabilities.

