



Model Worksite Physical Activity Policy

Rationale for Policy

Adult Americans spend a significant amount of the day in the worksite. Creating a worksite culture that supports health and wellbeing provides many benefits to both employees and employers. Regular physical activity has inarguable benefits on health, the reduction of chronic disease, and overall quality of life. Physical activity reduces the risk of premature death, coronary heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, osteoporosis, and certain types of cancer. Employers that encourage physical activity in the worksite have reported less absenteeism and higher productivity due to lack of illness, obesity, injury, or chronic conditions. *This model worksite physical activity policy provides a framework to encourage and support employee physical activity and create a worksite culture that supports health and total well-being.*

Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans

The 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans (PAG) recommends adults participate in at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise, or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic exercise, or an equivalent combination of both, per week. For additional health benefits, 300 minutes or more of moderate-intensity, or 150 minutes of vigorous-intensity, or an equivalent combination of both per week is recommended. The PAG also recommends muscle strengthening exercises 2 or more days per week involving all major muscle groups (i.e. arms, legs, back, chest, shoulders, core/abdominals). Physical activity can be performed in increments of 10 minutes at a time over the course of a day and week.

Policy Components

The first step in creating a worksite environment that supports physical activity for all employees is to utilize this **model policy** in its entirety or adapt this **model policy** to meet the needs of the worksite. A physical activity worksite policy can include a few or all of the major components listed below:

1. *(insert worksite name)* encourages all **employees** to engage in regular physical activity during their work day and at home. Employees are encouraged and supported through the following:

- a. **Active Meetings:** Staff organizing a full working day meeting will incorporate a set amount of time (i.e. 15 or 30 minutes) for physical activity break(s) into the meeting. For example: a one-hour lunch break could have 30 minutes dedicated for physical activity, or two scheduled 15 minute breaks for physical activity throughout the day (i.e. stretching, walking).
 - b. **Alternative Work Schedules:** Managers and supervisors encourage and support all staff to utilize breaks and lunch periods for physical activity during the work day. In addition, managers and supervisors are encouraged to allow flexible schedules to accommodate employee physical activity, while assuring primary work is accomplished (i.e. flexible work schedules to accommodate active transportation commuters or those that bike/walk to and from work or those that choose to be physically active over lunch periods).
 - c. **Allotted Staff Planning Time:** Time will be dedicated for appropriate staff to organize and disseminate information about regular and special opportunities for physical activity engagement or for environmental enhancements to support physical activity.
 - d. **Dedicated Physical Activity Time:** Outside of regularly scheduled breaks, employees will be allocated time to be active each day or week. For example, outside of regular break times, employees are allowed 30 minutes per week to engage in physical activity during paid time while assuring all primary job duties are accomplished.
 - e. **Healthy Stairwells/Scenic Stairs:** Stairwells will be opened and encouraged for use during all business hours, especially during breaks throughout the day. Stairwells will be maintained, safe, visually appealing, well-lit and easily accessible to all employees.
 - f. **Dedicated Walking Paths/Trails with Signage:** Outdoor or indoor walking areas will be identified with appropriate signage to indicate safe, accessible, and attractive areas for employees to walk and or walk/bike to and from work.
 - g. **Bike Facilities and Amenities:** Bike storage, bike racks, and other biking amenities will be provided to encourage active transportation to work, or for use during dedicated physical activity time or regular break times.
2. *(insert worksite name)* 'employer' will create an environment that supports a physical activity culture in the workplace where all employees are encouraged and supported to be more physically active through:
- a. Support from leadership staff to enhance and promote physical activity.
 - b. Encouraging regular physical activity both at the workplace and at home, and recognizing the importance of work life balance.

- c. Making significant attempts to alter and enhance the workplace built environment to increase and enhance physical activity opportunities for employees.
- d. Utilizing and implementing additional physical activity policy strategies from reliable and research based sources.
- e. Supporting physical activity among all employees regardless of abilities.
- f. Providing various social support opportunities in the workplace to encourage physical activity.

Education and Implementation

1. The *(insert worksite name)* physical activity policy will be posted, discussed at employee meetings, promoted through multiple communication channels, and presented at new employee orientations to educate and inform all employees.
2. Employees interested in engaging in physical activity may seek additional information from *(human resources, worksite wellness coordinator or wellness champion)* or access this policy at *(insert website or building location)*.
3. To support and enhance *(insert worksite name)* physical activity policy, additional evidenced-based physical activity workplace strategies will be implemented.
4. Learning opportunities on various physical activity topics will be provided to employees to increase knowledge, skills and attitudes on physical activity.
5. Addressing barriers to implementation is key to a successful worksite physical activity policy. Conducting pre and post employee assessments as well as process evaluations will provide useful information on employee barriers to physical activity to plan and implement successful workplace policy (See *Evaluation Section*).

Evaluation

An important component to developing sustainable worksite physical activity policy is evaluation. Evaluating your efforts lets you know if the policy components in place are working and have any effect on your employees. (Source: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Steps to Wellness: A Guide to Implementing the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans in the Workplace](#)). This process should be considered early in the planning process when implementing your worksite physical activity policy, which can be simple or complex. Potential elements to measure in an evaluation are worker productivity, health care costs, health outcomes, organizational change, and improving your workplace program (Source: [South Dakota WorkWell - Workplace Wellness Toolkit](#)). Evaluation is an ongoing effort to assess your worksite physical activity policy and should be conducted on a regular basis.

Suggestions for worksite physical activity specific policy evaluation are listed below with additional evaluation resources listed in the Resources section:

- **Pre/Post Employee and Employer Assessment** - measure health status, behaviors, attitudes or knowledge. Results will determine the amount of change.
- **Process Evaluation** - measures process of administering the activity, event or program and is considered the most basic level of evaluation. Results of this evaluation may help determine the usefulness of the activity, event or program.
- **Outcome Evaluation** - measures whether or not goals were met. Results of this evaluation may help refine future programs or activities.
- **Impact Evaluation** - measures effects of program and looks beyond the set goals. Results may help you revise the goals or expectations moving forward.
- **Worksite Environmental Audit** - assess how well worksite enables employee health by using environmental audit tools to assess the physical features of the worksite. Refer to [CDC Environmental Audits](#) for more information.
- **Worksite Policy Implementation** – assess the overall implementation of a policy or set of policies with the worksite to determine level of success, areas for improvement, and ongoing policy maintenance needs. This can encompass several types of evaluations.

Definition of Terms

- **Aerobic Exercise:** Also called endurance or cardio activity, the body's large muscles moving in a rhythmic manner for a sustained period of time.
- **Active Transportation:** The integration of physical activity into daily routines such as walking or biking to destinations such as work, grocery stores, or parks.
- **Built Environment:** The physical parts or structures of where we live, work and play such as homes, buildings, streets and other infrastructure.
- **Chronic Disease:** Non-communicable diseases not passed from person to person. They are of long duration and generally slow progression. The four main types of non-communicable diseases are cardiovascular diseases (heart attacks and stroke), cancers, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes.
- **Physical Activity:** Any bodily movement that enhances health.
- **Intensity:** The level of effort required to do an activity.
- **Moderate-Intensity Aerobic Activity:** Individual can talk, but not sing during this type of activity.
- **Vigorous-Intensity Aerobic Activity:** Individual cannot say more than a few words without pausing for a breath.

Resources

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Overcoming Barriers to PA
<http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/getactive/barriers.html>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Healthy Worksite Initiative
<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/hwi/index.htm>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Worksite Health ScoreCard
http://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/pubs/docs/HSC_Manual.pdf
- Federal 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines (PAG) for Americans
<http://www.health.gov/paguidelines/guidelines/>
- South Dakota WorkWell Toolkit
<http://goodandhealthysd.org/workplaces/>
- Good & Healthy Workplaces
<http://goodandhealthysd.org/workplaces/>
- Steps to Wellness: A Guide to Implementing the PAG for Americans in the Workplace
http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/hwi/downloads/Steps2Wellness_BROCH14_508_Tag508.pdf
- Wellness Council of America, WELCOA
<http://www.welcoa.org/freeresources/index.php?category=11>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Healthier Worksite Program Design
<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/hwi/programdesign/index.htm>

For more information, contact the South Dakota Department of Health at (605)-773-3737 or <http://goodandhealthysd.org/>. 6/2014

