



WILLISTON CENTRAL SCHOOL, BIKE RACKS



## Five Steps to Worksite Wellness

### Worksite Wellness to Reduce Chronic Disease

It is easier to meet your own health goals when you have a supportive workplace. But competing priorities and limited resources can make it difficult for employers to know where to begin and how to make an impact. However, focusing on improving just three behaviors can reduce chronic disease and improve quality of life.

3-4-50 signifies **3 behaviors** – lack of physical activity, poor diet, and tobacco use – that lead to **4 chronic diseases** – cancer, heart disease and stroke, type 2 diabetes, and lung disease – that are the cause of more than **50 percent of all deaths** in Vermont. Together, businesses, schools, cities and towns, and health care providers can create and shape an environment that supports healthy options and makes them more accessible where Vermonters live, work, learn and play.

Worksites can take simple steps to support employee health and well-being. We invite you to become a 3-4-50 partner by implementing worksite wellness strategies that address chronic disease. Visit [healthvermont.gov/3-4-50/businesses](http://healthvermont.gov/3-4-50/businesses) to learn more and sign-on!

If you are just starting with implementing worksite wellness strategies, you can follow these five steps to establish a strong foundation for your worksite. The following pages will discuss each of these steps in more detail, provide tips on engaging and motivating employees, and provide the components of comprehensive worksite wellness.

#### Step 1: Form a Wellness Team

- Identify the individuals that will spearhead wellness programs and gain leadership support.
- Develop a vision and mission that will guide wellness programs.

#### Step 2: Assess Your Worksite

- Assess your worksite to identify any gaps in existing policies and programs.
- Assess the needs and interests of your employees.

#### Step 3: Identify Strategies

- Identify strategies from the Health Department's Six Core Outcomes for Healthy Worksites to implement over the next 6–12 months (see Section 2).
- Develop an implementation plan that includes:
  - A timeline
  - Specific goals and objectives
  - Methods of communicating the strategies to your employees

#### Step 4: Implement

- Implement your selected strategy or strategies.

#### Step 5: Evaluate

- Evaluate your program by assessing employee participation and satisfaction.

## Step 1: Form a Wellness Team

Having leadership support is the backbone of successful employee wellness strategies. Organizational leadership is crucial in obtaining financial resources, linking your wellness goals to business outcomes and implementing policy and environmental changes in the workplace.

If you haven't already gained leadership support, this is the first task. It is important to inform and engage leadership with your wellness vision. Making your case can involve communicating the benefits of employee wellness promotion—including the vision, outcomes, and any assessment or employee feedback.

Form a wellness team to ensure representation and input from all areas of the organization—and to share the work. Recruit wellness team members who represent diversity in age, culture, gender, sexual orientation and disability status, as well as from all areas of the organization, such as:

- Leadership
- Organizational and development
- Employee Assistance Program providers
- Food service
- Maintenance
- Finance
- Human resources
- Individual departments
- Marketing and public relations
- Sales
- Board members
- Safety
- Insurance providers
- Occupational health

### A wellness team can:

- Assess the health risks and current lifestyle behaviors of employees through health interest or needs surveys.
- Assess current policies and environmental factors that may affect employee wellness.
- Evaluate existing resources and gaps in services.
- Plan and implement the wellness program.
- Conduct financial planning for implementation of the wellness program.
- Establish and enhance relationships with other community organizations and government agencies to partner on shared goals—for example, encouraging active transportation in partnership with an environmental group to promote physical activity and decrease pollution.

### What is the vision and mission of your company's wellness initiative?

As you begin the steps to identify wellness strategies, it is important to have a broader vision and mission for your wellness initiative to help guide your strategies to accomplish a broader purpose. If your organization has an organizational mission statement, aligning the vision and mission of the wellness initiative can create a pathway for leadership and employees to understand and support the strategies you want to implement.

## Step 2: Assess Your Worksite

Conduct an assessment of the organization and its employees before implementing strategies to ensure they meet their needs. This can include the physical and cultural environment, policies, health benefit design and current health promoting policies and programs.

### The organizational assessment:

- Determines your worksite's strengths.
- Draws attention to areas in need of improvement.
- Highlights opportunities to make the worksite more supportive of healthy behaviors.

Take an organizational assessment online or download a PDF at [healthvermont.gov/worksites-wellness](https://healthvermont.gov/worksites-wellness)

### The employee assessment includes items such as:

- health screenings
- employee needs
- employee interests
- quality of work life survey

**Toolkit** ▶ *Employee Interest Survey*

## Step 3: Identify Strategies

Once the assessments are completed, use the information gathered to identify one or more strategies to promote employee wellness. The next section provides examples of many strategies for six core outcome areas for a healthy worksite.

After identifying strategies, develop an implementation plan that includes:

- a timeline
- specific goals and objectives
- methods of communicating the strategy to your employees

### Creating Goals and Objectives

Goals are broad statements that describe what is to be accomplished. Objectives state the expected amount of change in behavior, attitude, knowledge or condition—to whom and by when. Objectives should:

- Have measurable language such as "increase" or "decrease."
- Clearly identify the behavior, attitude, condition or knowledge to be changed.
- Establish the timeframe within which an activity takes place.
- Determine the magnitude of the anticipated change (when possible).
- Determine how change will be measured.

Make your objectives “**SMART**”:

- S**pecific
- M**easurable
- A**chievable
- R**ealistic
- T**ime sensitive

**For example:**

**Goal 1: Our workplace will promote an active lifestyle**

**Objective 1:** By year 1, a policy will be in place allowing flex-time for physical activity.

**Objective 2:** By year 2, maps of nearby trails and walking routes will be provided to all employees.

**Toolkit** ▶ *Activity Prioritizing Tool, Action Plan Worksheet*

## Step 4: Implement

Three key considerations in implementing your selected strategies are awareness, accessibility and inclusion.

### Awareness

Make sure that employees know about any changes to the workplace or any new offerings available to them. See page 10 for more information on communicating with employees.

### Accessibility

Make sure details about the selected strategies and any relevant resources are easily accessible for all employees. For example, if your strategy requires computer access (such as signing up for a wellness challenge or accessing a wellness portal), but some employees do not have computer access during the work day, create an alternative option. This could include signing up by calling a contact on the wellness team or ensuring a mobile phone option is available.

### Inclusion

Ensure that opportunities to participate are available to all employees, regardless of age, cultural or religious practices, gender, sexual orientation and disability status. In certain cases, a selected strategy might focus on one part of the population more than another. For example, a breast cancer awareness campaign might target employees who need breast cancer screenings. Promote inclusiveness to the greatest extent possible.

Some examples:

- Provide wheelchair-friendly options for a walking challenge.
- Make sure selected activities are sensitive to diverse cultural and religious beliefs.
- Provide translated, large-print or other adapted versions of written materials.
- Look for resources on creating accessible gardens when developing a plan for a worksite garden.
- Include the opportunity to verbally receive information about programs, policies or awareness campaigns.

## Step 5: Evaluate

Worksites should plan to evaluate any implemented strategies. It is important to assess whether strategies are being effective in accomplishing the established goals and objectives and whether they align with the broader vision and mission. It is also important to assess how employees and management are receiving new activities, policies and programs, and any return on investment.

Evaluation can help identify successes and areas for improvement, as well as advise next steps.

A few ways to evaluate wellness strategies are:

- Tracking participation rates in offered activities
- Employee surveys to look at changes in behaviors
- Employee surveys to look at employee satisfaction
- Medical claims analysis to look at changes in health outcomes
- Productivity metrics, such as measuring absenteeism
- Biometric measures

**Toolkit** ▶ *Evaluation Tools and Measures*