

Vermont Worksite Wellness Resource

Creating a Healthier Worksite



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The Vermont Department of Health can help.

We're here to assist you as you set about creating or expanding your worksite wellness program.

For additional information, contact your local Health Department office.

Call us toll-free or fill out our online contact form: <http://healthvermont.gov/about/contact>

This guide can also be found online at the Vermont Department of Health website:

www.healthvermont.gov/wellness/physical-activity-nutrition/worksite

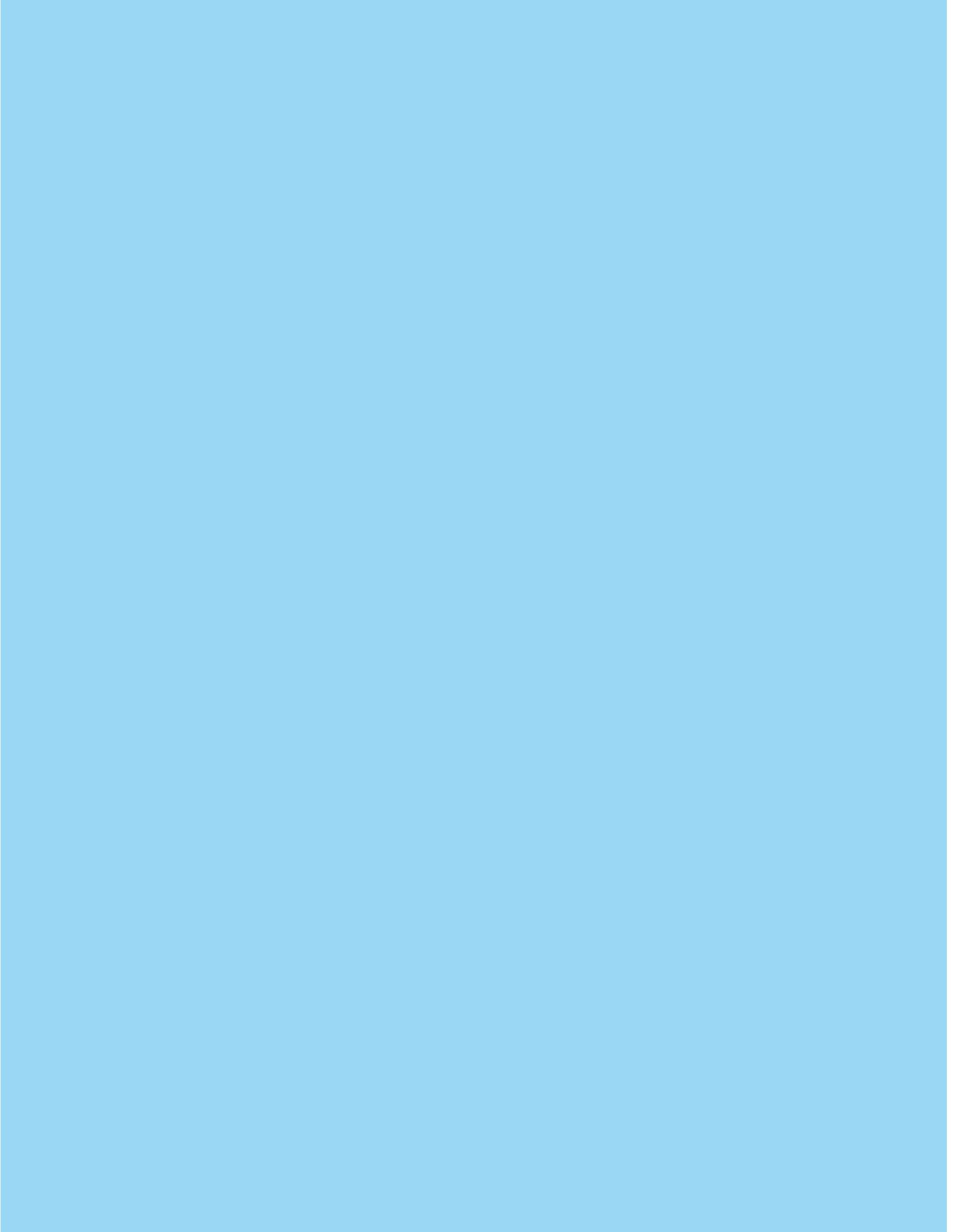
About this guide

The purpose of the *Vermont Worksite Wellness Resource: Creating a Healthier Worksite* is to guide you through steps to design and sustain a wellness program that fits the scale and culture of your organization. Our focus is on promoting physical and emotional health, reducing the major risk factors that lead to chronic disease—physical inactivity, poor nutrition, and tobacco use—and supporting preventative care and breastfeeding.

Vermont Worksite Wellness Resource

Creating a Healthier Worksite

Section 1: Getting Started





Why Worksite Wellness?

For much of the week, most Vermonters spend more than one third of their day at their workplace. The programs, policies and environment at their worksite significantly influence the health of employees and their families. Worksites can also have a positive impact on the health of the communities they are located in.

Worksite wellness strategies cover a wide range of topics, from reducing injury at the workplace to supporting emotional wellbeing. Worksites can also play an important role in helping to reduce chronic disease. Vermonters are more likely to die from chronic disease than all other causes of death combined. Through programs, policies and healthy environments, worksites can help support healthy behaviors that reduce chronic disease risk.

Worksite Wellness and the Bottom Line

Businesses also benefit financially from prioritizing worksites wellness. Lost productivity, absenteeism and direct medical expenses are costly for employers.

- Lost productivity due to absenteeism costs employers an estimated \$1,685 per employee. – *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)*
- Lost productivity costs due to poor presenteeism (where employees are at work but not able to perform fully because of sickness or stress) are even higher. – *Harvard Business Review*
- The cost of obesity for a company with 1,000 employees is estimated to be \$277,000 per year. – *CDC*
- Employed adults miss more than 164 million hours a year due to dental issues. – *Surgeon General*
- Direct healthcare costs attributable to six factors—body mass index (BMI), blood pressure, total cholesterol, blood glucose, tobacco use and alcohol use—accounts for an added \$623 per employee every year. – *Thomson Reuters Workforce Wellness Index*

Worksite wellness strategies can result in significant cost savings for employers through increased productivity, reduced absenteeism, reduced workers compensation and disability claims, and health care costs.



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 wellbeing. 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 to learn more and sign-on!



Five Steps to Worksite Wellness

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 strategy/ies 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/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/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

Assessments should be completed before implementing strategies to ensure they meet the needs of employees and the organization. Conduct an assessment of the organization and the employees. The assessment of your organization can include the physical and cultural environment, policies, health benefit design and current health promoting policies and programs. A good understanding of current employee behaviors and interest areas will help you select the best strategies for your organization.

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

<http://healthvermont.gov/worksite-wellness>

The employee assessment includes items such as:

- health screenings
- employee interests
- employee needs
- 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 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 flextime 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 workday, create an alternative option (such as 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 female employees), but 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 a 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*



Engaging Your Employees

Communication

Employee engagement in your wellness activities may be one of the biggest challenges your face. A written communication plan can help you achieve many of your goals and objectives. If employees do not know what you are offering or how it will benefit them, they will not participate.

A communication plan can:

- increase awareness
- increase knowledge
- reinforce attitudes
- maintain interest
- provide cues and motivation for action
- demonstrate simple skills
- build social norms

Communication channels can include:

- media
- newsletters
- direct mailings
- company website
- social media
- emails
- text messages
- podcasts
- meetings

Also consider:

- **Status updates:** Provide regular status updates to employees.
- **Messaging:** Use culturally-appropriate communication, including messaging that address the overall value and purpose of the wellness program to the organization and the employee.
- **Recruiting staff members with marketing and communications skills** to be part of the wellness team.

Employee Readiness

Employees will likely be in varying states of behavior change (explained below) when you begin to implement your wellness strategies. Some may already be living healthy lifestyles, while others might not be thinking about making changes. Information from employee interest surveys can help determine how motivated and ready employees are to make changes, as well as what strategies will be most likely to be accepted.

Below are the five stages of change. People may move from one stage to another in order, or they may move back and forth between stages until they adopt a behavior for good. Moving to an earlier stage is not a failure, but an important part of the behavior change process. The stages of change are:

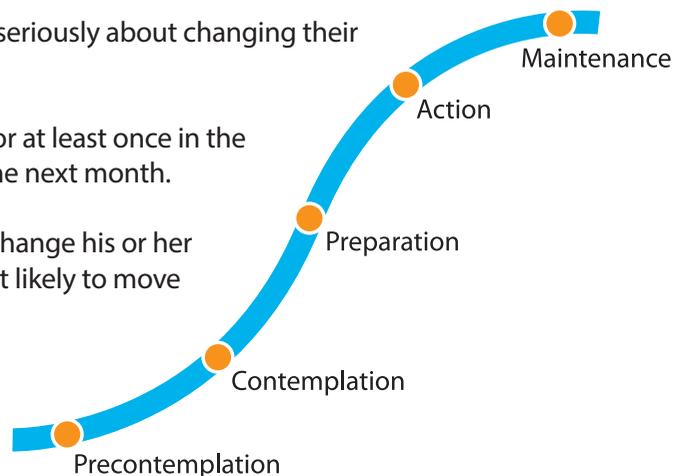
Pre-contemplation: An individual is not thinking about changing their behavior in the near future.

Contemplation: An individual is beginning to think seriously about changing their behavior in the next six months.

Preparation: An individual tried to change a behavior at least once in the past year and is thinking about trying again within the next month.

Action: An individual is taking real steps to actively change his or her behavior. This is the stage where an individual is most likely to move back to an earlier stage.

Maintenance: An individual has changed their behavior for more than six months and is now maintaining the change.



Motivation

Some factors to consider to help employees stay motivated include:

- **Time:** Try to work activities into employees' existing schedules (e.g., provide time off for accessing preventative care).
- **Access:** Make sure activities are accessible (e.g., host them on-site or provide transportation)
- **Knowledge:** Provide information on the benefits of participating in an activity and additional related resources.
- **Cost:** Whenever possible, make sure activities are free.
- **Incentives:** If possible, provide incentives for participation, such as prizes.

State and federal laws may be applicable to the use of financial incentives tied to health status. Make sure to research and comply with any laws. Two specific laws to research before using financial incentives are the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Affordable Care Act (ACA). For more information, see resources provided by the Public Health Law Center at www.publichealthlawcenter.org/topics/healthy-eating/worksite-wellness/resources.

Types of Worksite Wellness Activities

A comprehensive worksite wellness initiative will include all of the following components: awareness, education, behavior change, policy and environment change. Depending on your worksite's needs, resources and vision, you may choose to initially focus on one or two components and slowly work toward a comprehensive worksite wellness program over time.

Awareness

Awareness interventions bring health topics to light that employees may not have considered. They highlight key facts and health risks related to certain behaviors and/or health conditions. Examples include:

- activity challenges
- health screenings/biometric screenings

Education

Education interventions are more formal than awareness programs, and can include classes, presentations or written materials. Education programs can get more in-depth on a particular topic and can provide skill-building activities. Examples include:

- onsite cooking classes
- strength training guides

Behavior Change

Behavior change interventions include evidence-based programs, activities and information designed to support employees in adopting behaviors that will lead to better health. These programs can take more time or resources but can be more effective than awareness or education interventions alone. Examples include:

- health coaching
- a four-week tobacco cessation class
- a six-month diabetes prevention program

Policy and Environment

Policy and environment interventions are often the most effective because they ultimately affect the health status of the highest percentage of employees, more than any other intervention alone. These changes take more time and planning, and require a strong communication plan. Examples include:

- tobacco-free campus policy
- break areas with fridge and microwave for employees to bring their own food
- onsite bike racks, showers or exercise facilities
- onsite garden or Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) deliveries

Toolkit ▶ *Sample policies, Ways to Create a Supportive Environment*

Vermont Worksite Wellness Resource

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Section 2: Strategies

SIX CORE OUTCOMES FOR HEALTHY WORKSITES





Promote Healthy Food Choices at the Workplace

WHY this is important

Over 60 percent of employed adults in Vermont are overweight or obese, and more than 80 percent do not eat the recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables a day.

Healthy eating improves overall wellness and decreases obesity and other chronic disease risk. Worksites can play an important role in promoting healthy eating and making sure healthy food options are available to employees at meetings and events and in vending machines and cafeterias.

HOW to support this outcome

- Implement healthy food and beverage policies for meetings.
- Provide refrigerators, microwaves and break areas. Encourage a culture where staff regularly take their lunch break.
- Provide access to free water available throughout the day.
- Support healthy choices from vending machines and cafeterias by:
 - using competitive pricing to make healthier choices more economical in vending machines or cafeterias.
 - implementing healthy vending machine and cafeteria standards to increase the percentage of healthy options that are available.
 - using signs or symbols to make healthy choices stand out, and make nutrition information available for foods and beverages.

- Provide incentives for participating in nutrition and/or weight management activities.
- Include employee’s family members in campaigns that promote healthy nutrition.
- Support local food initiatives by:
 - offering an on-site Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program.
 - organizing a worksite garden—consider accessibility issues to make sure the garden can be accessed by individuals with disabilities.
 - providing local food in the cafeteria.
 - subsidizing or discounting a CSA program.
 - exploring opportunities with local farms for a mobile or on-site farmers market.

Highlighted activities offer the highest impact.

WHERE to go for resources

- Get worksite garden support at Vermont Community Garden Network: www.vcgn.org
- Find a CSA program: www.nofavt.org
- For healthy vending tools: www.nems-v.com/
- Vermont 2-1-1 (dial 2-1-1)

Toolkit ▶ *Sample Nutrition Policy Template*

For more info ▶ The Vermont Department of Health is here to help. Contact the district office near you: www.healthvermont.gov/local.



Go Tobacco-Free

WHY is this important?

Tobacco use continues to be a leading cause of preventable death in Vermont. Sixteen percent of employed adults smoke regularly. Some groups of employed adults—including those working in food service, maintenance and construction-related occupations—have even higher rates of tobacco use.

The prevalence of adult smoking has decreased over the last decade, in part due to policies supporting tobacco-free workplace. Worksites can continue to play an important role in reducing tobacco use and creating an environment that supports a right to breathe clean air.

HOW to support this outcome

- Create a property-wide tobacco free policy and make sure employees are aware it exists.
- Move cigarette receptacles away from building entrances.
- Support tobacco cessation efforts by:
 - promoting free Quit Resources through 802Quits (**802quits.org**).
 - establishing a policy that allows employees to access smoking cessation support during the work day (i.e. flexing time).
 - providing an on-site group cessation class.
 - ensuring that tobacco cessation counseling and medication are offered through the organization's health insurance.

Highlighted activities offer the highest impact.

WHERE to go for resources

- Free cessation support for individuals: **802quits.org**
- For information on potential on-site cessation classes, contact your local Vermont Quit Partner, area hospital or insurance provider.
- Find a Vermont Quit Partner near you:
802quits.org/in-person-quit-help/find-a-vermont-quit-partner/
- Vermont 2-1-1 (dial 2-1-1)

Toolkit ▶ *Sample Tobacco-Free Campus Policy Template*

For more info ▶ The Vermont Department of Health is here to help. Contact the district office near you: **www.healthvermont.gov/local**.



Help Employees Get Daily Physical Activity

WHY this is important

People who are more physically active have a reduced risk of obesity, heart disease, diabetes and some types of cancer. Physical activity also supports emotional health and stress reduction. All of these benefits contribute to a happier and more productive employee, which can save an organization money.

It is important to consider the diverse physical abilities of employees, and to make sure that any physical activity program is inclusive of employees with disabilities. Employees should be encouraged or required to consult with a physician and/or sign a consent form before beginning any exercise program offered at a workplace.

HOW to support this outcome

- Implement policies that allow employees to be active during the day (e.g., flex-time, using paid time for physical activity).
- Support physical activity breaks and active meetings (such as walking meetings).
- Provide on-site bike racks in safe and convenient locations.
- Use signs, prompts, and create “inviting” stairwells to encourage the use of stairs.
- Provide maps of trails or walking paths in the area.
- Provide on-site fitness equipment or discount memberships at local gyms.
- Provide incentives for participating in physical activity or weight management activities.
- Include family members in activities that promote physical activity, such as challenges.
- Enter local fitness activities, such as 5K fun runs, as a company team.
- Consider the physical abilities of all employees and offer accommodations and alternatives.

Highlighted activities offer the highest impact.

WHERE to go for resources

- Local Motion: www.localmotion.org
- Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation area maps and trails: fpr.vermont.gov/recreation/trail-maps-and-guides
- “Take the Stairs!” signs: www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/worksite-pa/toolkits/stairwell/motivational_signs.htm
- Vermont 2-1-1 (dial 2-1-1)
- Go! Vermont: www.connectingcommuters.org

Toolkit ▶ *Sample Physical Activity Policy Template*

For more info ▶ The Vermont Department of Health is here to help. Contact the district office near you: www.healthvermont.gov/local.



Become a Breastfeeding-Friendly Workplace

WHY this is important

Employees who breastfeed receive important health advantages, including reduced risk for breast cancer, ovarian cancer, and Type 2 diabetes, along with a more rapid return to pre-pregnancy weight. Breast milk by itself contains all the nutrients a baby needs for the first six months. Continuing to breastfeed after solid foods are introduced, provides important nutrients and immune benefits to the growing baby.

Employees need to know that when they return to work they have a place to feed their babies or pump breastmilk. Active support from the worksite and management is essential for the employee's successful transition back to the workplace. Employers also benefit significantly from supporting breastfeeding employees through decreased employee turnover, and reduced absenteeism and healthcare costs.

HOW to support this outcome

- Establish a written policy that states your company's support of a women's choice to breastfeed.
- Allow the use of flexible time and breaks for expressing breastmilk.
- Provide a clean, private space (that is not a bathroom) for expressing breast milk.
- Provide lactation education through flyers, classes or other venues.

Highlighted activities offer the highest impact.

WHERE to go for resources

- Vermont Department of Health: [healthvermont.gov/worksites-wellness](https://www.healthvermont.gov/worksites-wellness)

Toolkit ▶ *Sample Breastfeeding Policy Template*

For more info ▶ The Vermont Department of Health is here to help. Contact the district office near you: www.healthvermont.gov/local.



Promote Preventive Care

WHY this is important

Chronic disease kills more people in Vermont than all other causes of death combined. Many of the strategies in the other five outcome areas promote chronic disease prevention through environments, policies and programs that promote healthy behaviors.

Worksites can also support and encourage employees in accessing preventative care. Over a third of employed adults in Vermont do not receive an annual medical exam, and many do not receive recommended screenings for their age and gender. A quarter of employed adults do not receive annual dental care, and many delay getting care when needed.

Worksites can also help limit the spread of acute infection by encouraging employees to stay home when sick, and by promoting immunizations, such as annual flu vaccines.

Along with supporting disease and infection prevention, worksites can also take measures to ensure the safety of their employees and help prevent injury.

HOW to support this outcome

- Use educational flyers, emails or other venues to share about the importance of preventative care including cancer screenings, oral health, asthma management and staying up to date on adult vaccinations.
 - Promote cancer screenings at the workplace with national awareness months.
 - Promote free or low-cost screening services for under or un-insured female workers through the You First Program.
 - Promote oral health, including dental cleanings and reducing sugary drink and food consumption.
 - Provide on-site education on cancer screenings, asthma management, hypertension and diabetes prevention and management, and oral health.
- Offer flu vaccination clinics on-site or post information on area flu clinics for the public.
- Offer paid sick leave and encourage employees to stay home when sick.
- Allow employees to use sick leave to access preventative care.
- Request a free, no penalty Project WorkSAFE consultation at your facility to help identify asthma problem areas and solutions.

Highlighted activities offer the highest impact.

WHERE to go for resources

- You First program: **YouFirstVT.org**
- Resources for oral health at Vermont Oral Health Coalition: **www.vtoralhealthcoalition.com/**
- Cancer awareness calendar: **www.cancer.org/about-us/who-we-are/cancer-awareness-calendar.html**
- Vermont Asthma Program: **www.healthvermont.gov/wellness/asthma**
- Vermont Cancer Program: **www.healthvermont.gov/wellness/cancer**
- Vermont Diabetes Program: **www.healthvermont.gov/wellness/diabetes**
- Vermont Heart Disease Program: **www.healthvermont.gov/wellness/heart-disease**
- Vermont Oral Health Program: **www.healthvermont.gov/wellness/oral-health**
- Diabetes Prevention Education and Classes: **<http://myhealthyvt.org/diabetes-prevention/>**
- Chronic disease prevention and management for individuals: **<http://myhealthyvt.org>**
- For information on potential on-site chronic disease education opportunities, contact your local area hospital or insurance provider
- Vermont 2-1-1 (dial 2-1-1)

For more info ► The Vermont Department of Health is here to help. Contact the district office near you: **www.healthvermont.gov/local**.



Promote Safety

WHY this is important

Along with supporting disease and infection prevention, worksites can also take measures to ensure the safety of their employees and help prevent injury.

HOW to support this outcome

- Request a free, confidential, no-penalty Project WorkSAFE consultation at your facility to help identify hazards and receive assistance in improving safety. Services include safety audits, chemical exposure assessments, noise monitoring, safety program development and evaluation. (Priority is given to workplaces with 250 or fewer employees.)
- Offer ergonomic assessments to employees to ensure a workspace that reduces risk of injury and chronic pain.
- Educate employees on state laws and best practices related to safe driving and develop workplace policies regarding seatbelt and cell phone use when using a vehicle for work purposes.
- Keep routes of travel and storage areas clear of obstructions and clutter; ensure that all travel areas accommodate wheelchairs.

Highlighted activities offer the highest impact.

WHERE to go for resources

- Project Worksafe: <http://labor.vermont.gov/project-worksafe/> or 1-888-SAFE YES
- Project Roadsafes: www.agcvt.org/project-roadsafe/
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/ergonomics/
- Vermont Safety and Health Council: <http://vshc.net>

For more info ▶ The Vermont Department of Health is here to help. Contact the district office near you: www.healthvermont.gov/local.



Support the Emotional Wellbeing of Employees

WHY this is important

Many employed adults are affected by mental health conditions that interfere with their personal and professional success and wellbeing. In Vermont, 18 percent of employed adults have a depressive disorder. Depression, anxiety disorders, attention problems and alcohol and substance abuse are among some of the mental health conditions that affect an employee's ability to succeed and have negative impacts on their physical health.

Work-related stress is also a major issue for many employed adults, contributing to poor physical and emotional outcomes, as well as decreased productivity and job satisfaction.

Creating a workplace culture and environment that supports the emotional wellbeing of all employees can result in healthier and more productive employees. This also benefits employers through cost savings, reduced absenteeism and increased productivity.

HOW to support this outcome

- Have a policy that supports employees who have mental health issues; including leaves of absence and plans for returning to work.
- Have a policy addressing the use of alcohol and substances at work and all work-related functions.
- Provide training for supervisors on recognizing and responding to performance issues that may signal distress.
- Provide orientation for employees on workplace policies and support for mental health and substance use recovery.
- Provide stress-reduction activities at the workplace.

- Ensure that all employees are welcomed and included in workplace activities and wellness programs regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, race or ethnicity.
- Provide education to employees on mental health and substance use:
 - health messages
 - screenings
 - on-site classes or clinics
- Provide employees with a list of local resources on mental health and substance use support in your area.
- Provide employees with information on the mental health benefits offered through the organization's insurance.
- Provide access to an Employee Assistance Program.
- Allow employees to access support services during working hours.
- Promote responsible drinking at any work-related events where alcohol is present.

Highlighted activities offer the highest impact.

WHERE to go for resources

- No-cost emotional wellness program for individuals: www.myhealthyvt.org/emotional-wellness
- Vermont Department of Health Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Program:
www.healthvermont.gov/alcohol-drugs
- Invest EAP: www.investeap.org
- Vermont 2-1-1 (dial 2-1-1)

Creating inclusive workplaces

- The Pride Center of Vermont: www.pridecentervt.org
- Mature Worker Program: vocrehab.vermont.gov/programs-and-services/mature-workers
- Creative Workforce Solution: www.cwsvt.com
- The Division for Blind and Visually Impaired: <http://dbvi.vermont.gov/>
- Industry-specific English language learning classes: www.refugees.org/field-office/Vermont/
- Vermont Center for Independent Living: www.vcil.org

For more info ► The Vermont Department of Health is here to help. Contact the district office near you: www.healthvermont.gov/local.

Vermont Worksite Wellness Resource

Creating a Healthier Worksite

Section 3: Toolkit

RESOURCES & TEMPLATES

Employee Interest Survey

Directions

1. Distribute the employee interest survey to all employees.
2. Designate a location and date for employees to return surveys anonymously.
3. Collect all completed surveys.
4. Tally the responses for each question on all surveys.
5. The response items with the most checkmarks will give you an indication of your employees' interests.
6. Share the results with employees so that they know their feedback was heard and taken seriously.

Employee Interest Survey

Employee Interest Survey

Thank you for completing this survey. Your responses will give us insight into the types of activities that interest you. Participation in this survey is voluntary, and you do not need to respond to any question(s) that you do not wish to answer.

The survey should take about five minutes to complete. We will use the information you provide to incorporate policies and environmental supports into our worksite to help support your individual health efforts.

1. Which of the following policy supports would be of interest to you if offered at the worksite? (Check all that apply.)

- Tobacco-free grounds
- Healthy food/drinks at meetings
- Paid time for physical activity
- Flexible work schedule
- Flexible dress code for physical activity
- Healthy food/drinks in vending machines
- Other: _____
- Not interested in any of the above

2. Which of the following supports would be of interest to you if offered at the worksite? (Check all that would be of interest.)

- Company garden
- Discounted gym membership
- Tobacco cessation assistance
- Farmers market at work
- Walking paths around worksite
- Bicycle parking
- Prompts to take the stairs
- Not interested in any of the above
- Other: _____

Employee Interest Survey

Employee Interest Survey (continued)

3. How would you prefer to receive information about employee health activities?

Check one:

- Bulletin boards
- Email
- Memo
- Newsletter
- Paycheck stuffer
- Other _____
- Not interested in receiving information about health activities

4. Are you interested in participating in planning health programs and/or activities?

Yes No

(Optional) If yes, please provide your name and phone number so that we may follow up:

(Source: Adapted from Michigan Department of Community Health. Sample Employee Survey)

Activity Prioritizing Tool

INSTRUCTIONS

Rate each of the recommendations identified in the Worksite Wellness Assessment on the following aspects: importance, cost, time, commitment. Rate each on a scale of 1–5 using the chart below. Higher scores should indicate priority items to implement.

Importance: How important is the recommendation?

1 = Not at all important, 3 = Somewhat important, 5 = Very important

Cost: How expensive would it be to plan and implement the recommendation?

1 = Very expensive, 3 = Moderately expensive, 5 = Not expensive

NOTE: You can get an idea of relative cost by looking at the programming strategy tables, which are arranged by low, medium, and high resources needs.

Time: How much time and effort would be needed to implement the recommendation?

1 = Extensive time and effort, 3 = Moderate time and effort, 5 = Low time and effort

Commitment: How enthusiastic would employees be about implementing the recommendation?

1 = Not enthusiastic, 3 = Moderately enthusiastic, 5 = Very enthusiastic

Reach: How many employees will likely be affected by this recommendation?

1 = Very few employees, 3 = Some employees, 5 = Most or all employees

Action Plan Worksheet

Recommendations: Describe the strategies selected from the Activity-Prioritizing Tool.

Activities: List the activities required to meet the recommendation.

Time: How much time and effort would be needed to implement the recommendation?

Materials, Resources and Personnel: List the individuals who will do the work and the resources and tools they need to get the job done.

Time Frame: When will implementation begin? How long will it take to finish?

Evaluation: How will you measure your successes and/or misfortunes?

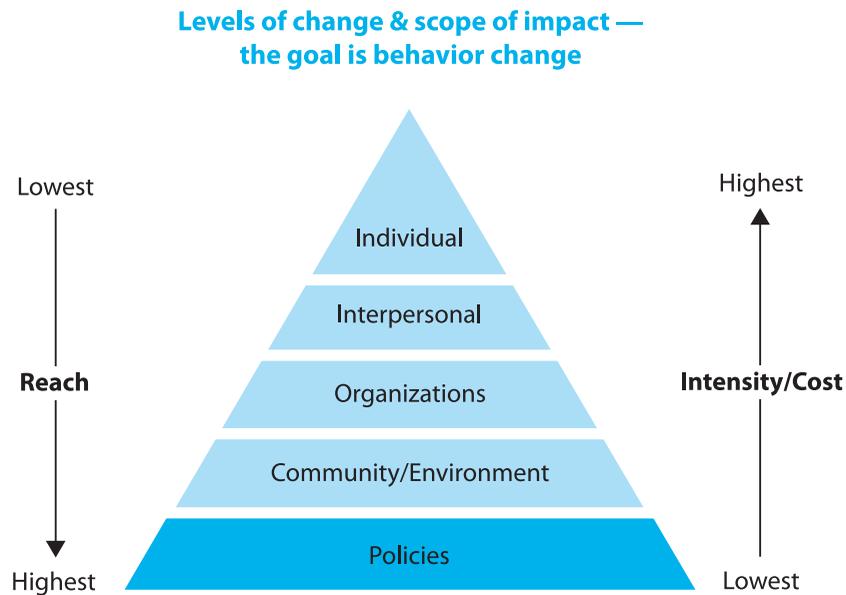
RECOMMENDATION	ACTIVITIES	MATERIALS, RESOURCES, and PERSONNEL	TIME FRAME	EVALUATION	COMMENTS:

Action Plan Worksheet

RECOMMENDATION	ACTIVITIES	MATERIALS, RESOURCES, and PERSONNEL	TIME FRAME	EVALUATION	COMMENTS:

Ways to Create a Supportive Environment

- Make healthy decisions the norm.
- Implement policies that encourage positive behavior change, e.g., a policy that provides breaks to breastfeeding mothers.
- Create policy and worksite environmental changes that require the lowest amount of resources and reach the greatest number of people.



Cultural Support Components

The cultural support components of an employer-sponsored wellness program are:

Leadership

- Leadership endorses and supports the wellness program.
- Leadership is involved in employee communications, creating incentives and other aspects of the program, and creating a corporate vision/mission statement that acknowledges the value of a healthy workplace culture.

Champions

- A wellness committee, champion and/or ambassador approach is implemented to help to design and advance the wellness program throughout the organization.
- An organized network of employees serving as wellness champions, a wellness committee with representatives from across the organization and volunteers who support wellness events are identified.

Environment

- A physical work environment supports employee engagement in healthy lifestyle behaviors and emphasizes safety. Examples include providing healthy food options, fitness centers, walking paths and lactation rooms.

Policies

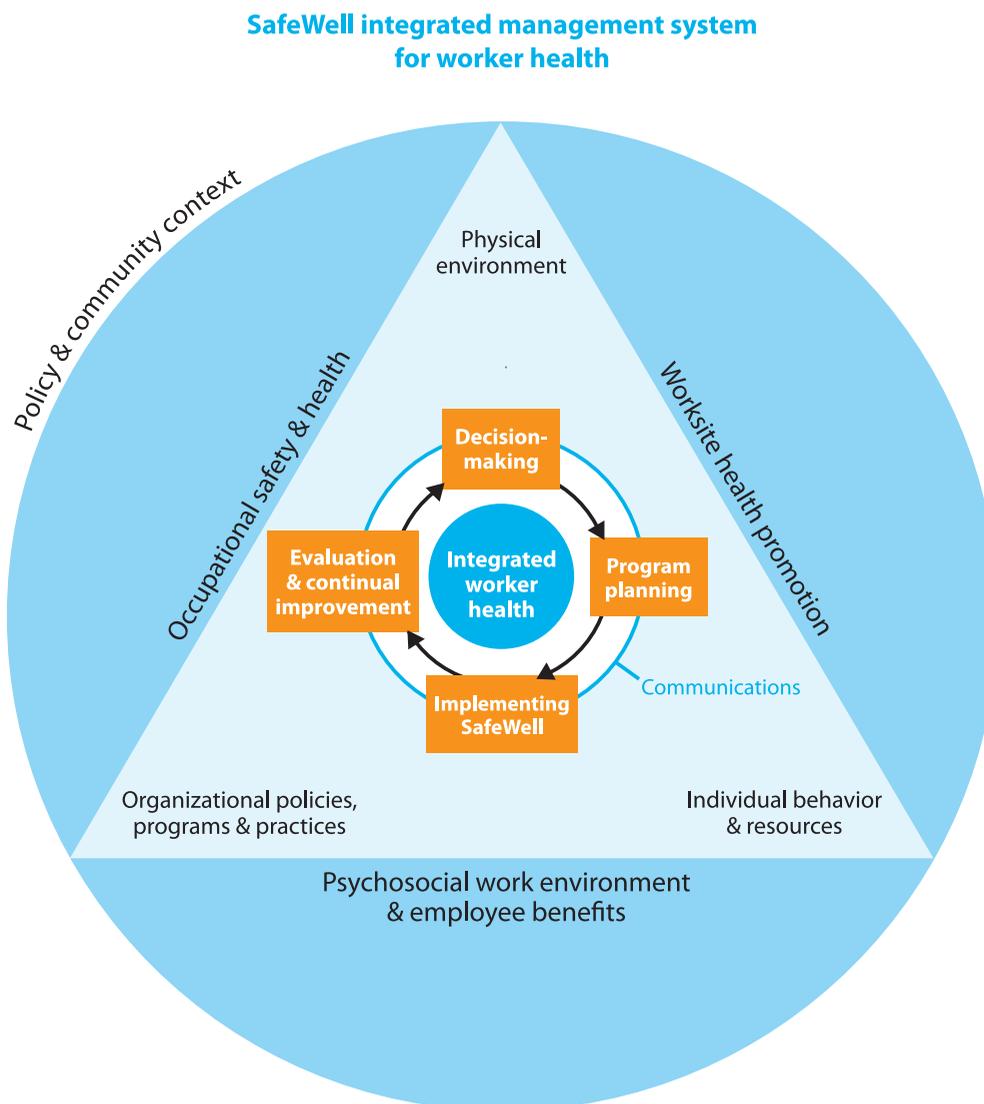
- Organizational policies support a healthy workplace. Examples include tobacco-free workplace/campus, flex-time to participate in wellness programs or to exercise, and healthy food options in vending machines, cafeterias and meetings.

Health benefits

- Coverage and access is offered or available for preventive services, and for acute and chronic health care services for all individuals. Examples include 24/7 access to nurse hotline, preventative health care coverage, and disease management class offering.

Safety & Employee Assistance Programs

Consider integrating safety and employee assistance programs into your wellness program. Below is an example of how worksite health promotion, occupational health and safety programs, and employee assistance programs can be integrated to maximize employee wellness.



Evaluation Tools and Measures

SAMPLE PROCESS OBJECTIVES	Year One	Year Two	CHANGE
Number of staff enrolled and participating (participation rates)			
Observation or counts (e.g. track number walking at noon)			
Participant satisfaction (via survey, focus groups, interviews, stakeholder survey, etc.)			
Policy or environmental changes/tracking (use Worksite Wellness Assessment Checklist and compare list of policy or environmental changes from initial site assessment with later follow up at one year, two years, etc.)			
SAMPLE OUTCOME OBJECTIVES	Year One	Year Two	CHANGE
Pretest/posttest surveys can measure changes in attitude, knowledge, current eating and physical activity habits from initial assessment to completion of a specified program or campaign			
Quizzes: test of knowledge on various topics			
Vending items being chosen (arrange with vendor to track selections)			
Cafeteria menu options			
Health indicators/reduced risk factors. Complete a comparison of company aggregate screening measures such as blood pressure, cholesterol, body weight, BMI, etc. before and after a specified program or campaign			
Corporate costs and return on investment (the expense side, or what it costs to run your wellness program, can be fairly easy to quantify. However, computing savings from reduced healthcare claims, lost work days or absenteeism may be harder to calculate. Work with your human resources and benefits contacts to determine what can be measured and then set a baseline figure to compare against later)			



Sample Workplace Policy Template: Nutrition Policy

PURPOSE: Vermonters are more likely to die from chronic diseases than all other causes of death combined. Worksites play an important role in the food environment. Worksites that promote a healthy food environment contribute to supporting the health of employees, increasing consumer demand for healthier food and helping strengthen local food systems.

[Company Name] is committed to providing a work environment that promotes healthy eating and supports employees in making healthy food choices in and outside of work.

POLICY STATEMENT: **[Company name]** will promote employee wellness and support healthy food choices. **[Company name]** will provide food and beverage options that meet the Vermont Department of Health Healthy Food Standards (see attached) whenever food or beverages are served or sold on company grounds or at company events: **[Select one or more options]**

- Healthy Food and Beverage Standards will be adhered to at meetings and company sponsored events in accordance with Vermont Department of Health [Healthy Food Standards](#).
- Healthy Food and Beverages Standards will be adhered to in vending machines in accordance with Vermont Department of Health [Healthy Food Standards](#).
- Healthy Food and Beverages Standards will be adhered to in cafes or cafeterias in accordance with Vermont Department of Health [Healthy Food Standards](#).

SCOPE: This policy applies to all employees, interns and volunteers of **[company name]**. **[Company name]** will ensure that wellness opportunities are provided for all employees, regardless of age, cultural or religious practices, gender, sexual orientation or disability status.

SUPPORTING ACTIVITIES: The following activities will be provided to employees to further support healthy food choices: **[Select one or more activities]**

- Refrigerators, microwaves and break areas will be offered for employee use.
- Access to free water will be available throughout the day.
- Vending machines and staff cafeteria(s) will:
 - Use competitive pricing to make healthier choices more economical.
 - Use signs or symbols to make healthy choices stand out, and make nutrition information available for foods and beverages.
- Local food initiatives will be supported:
 - Employees will have access to a [discounted] on-site Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program.
 - Whenever possible, local food will be offered in cafeteria(s) and at catered meetings and events.

Signature:

Date:

Developed by the Vermont Department of Health



Sample Workplace Policy Template: Physical Activity Policy

PURPOSE: Vermonters are more likely to die from chronic diseases than all other causes of death combined. The National Physical Activity Guidelines encourage adults to avoid inactivity and engage in a minimum of 2.5 hours or moderate physical activity a week in order to reduce the risk of developing many chronic diseases (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services). Physical activity also supports emotional wellbeing and can increase productivity in the workplace (SAMSHA).

[Company Name] is committed to providing a work environment that promotes physical activity and supports employees in meeting Physical Activity Guidelines.

POLICY STATEMENT: **[Company Name]** will support employee wellness and provide opportunities for employees to be physically active while at work, specifically:

- Managers and supervisors will support employees to use breaks and lunch periods for physical activity if desired, and if feasible for the employee's position.
- Employees may request a flexible schedule to engage in physical activity, including an alternate start or end time to the workday to accommodate physical activity before, during or after work.
- Employees will be encouraged to engage in active meetings, including taking walking meetings, providing activity breaks during meetings, and allowing for standing during meetings.

SCOPE: This policy applies to all employee, interns and volunteers of **[Company Name]**. **[Company Name]** will ensure that wellness opportunities are provided for all employees, regardless of age, cultural or religious practices, gender, sexual orientation or disability status.

SUPPORTING ACTIVITIES: The following activities will be provided to employees to support the implementation of this policy: **[Select one or more activities]**

- Bike racks will be provided onsite and employees are encouraged to get to work through active or sustainable means of transportation.
- Signs will be posted at usable stairwells to encourage the use of stairs.
- Functional on-site fitness equipment will be available to employees at no cost.
- Ergonomic assessments will be offered to employees at no charge.
- Active workstations, such as standing desks or treadmill desks, will be offered to employees at no charge.
- **[Company Name]** will subsidize membership to **[fitness center's name]** for employees and their domestic partners and dependent children.

Signature:

Date:

Developed by the Vermont Department of Health

QUIT@WORK

(This Word document is part of the [QUIT@WORK](#) toolkit.)

Model Smoke-Free Policy

It is the policy of **[insert company name]** to provide a smoke-free environment for all employees and visitors. This policy covers the smoking of any tobacco product and the use of smokeless or “spit” tobacco, and applies to both employees and non-employee visitors.

Definition

Vermont law requires that there will be no smoking of tobacco products within the facilities at any time.

If smoking occurs outside the building, it must be at least **[insert distance]** feet from the main entrance to ensure that the smoke does not enter the building. All materials used for smoking, including cigarette butts and matches, must be extinguished and disposed of in appropriate containers.

(For a smoke-free building and grounds) *There will be no smoking of tobacco products within the facilities or on the grounds at any time.*

*There will be no smoking in any **[insert company name]** vehicles at any time.*

There will also be no tobacco use in personal vehicles when transporting persons on **[insert company name]**-authorized business, or if the vehicle is parked on company premises.

Procedure

1. Visitors will be informed of this policy through signs and it will be explained by their host.
2. **[Insert company name]** will help employees who wish to quit smoking by providing information about Vermont’s quit smoking services.
3. Any violations of this policy will be handled through the standard disciplinary procedure.
4. For questions about *Vermont’s Smoking in the Workplace* law, or to file a complaint with the Department of Health, call (toll-free) 1-866-331-5622.





Sample text of a workplace breastfeeding policy

Business Name:

Date:

It is our policy to encourage all of our pregnant and postpartum employees to consider breastfeeding their children as a means of promoting the health of both child and mother. We encourage and support employees in their efforts to combine working and breastfeeding.

1. This workplace breastfeeding support policy recognizes that breastfeeding is the most healthful, natural and economic method of infant nutrition. It is our policy to support the needs of breastfeeding mothers when they return to work.
2. Maternity leave planning will address the transition from full-time maternity leave to full-time work and the impact that this may have on breastfeeding.
 - Maternity leave is sufficient to establish breastfeeding, generally 6-8 weeks.
 - Options include: a combination of full-time and part-time maternity leave, a flexible work schedule to accommodate breastfeeding needs, break times to use a breast pump at work.
3. Breastfeeding employees are allowed a flexible schedule for nursing or pumping. The time allowed will not exceed the normal time allowed for lunch and breaks. For time above and beyond normal lunch and breaks, sick/annual leave must be used or the employee can come in earlier, leave later or take a shorter lunch.
4. An appropriate room will be provided where nursing women can:
 - a. Nurse an infant brought in during lunch or breaks.
 - b. Pump breast milk to be stored for later use.
 - The room will be a private area for breastfeeding or pumping located in an area where a crying infant will not be disruptive to other employees.
 - The room will have accessible electrical outlets for electric breast pump use and a sink close by with a clean, safe water source for hand washing and rinsing out breast pump equipment.
 - The room will contain a comfortable chair with arms for nursing, a nursing stool could be optional, a table or desk and a chair for pumping.
5. If needed, a sign up sheet will be posted to ensure that all those needing the room will have the opportunity to use it.
6. A small refrigerator will be available for safe storage of breast milk. Breastfeeding women will provide their own containers and milk stored in the refrigerator will be clearly labeled with name and date. Those who use the refrigerator shall be responsible for keeping it clean.

Vermont Department of Health • Breastfeeding Friendly Employer Project • 108 Cherry Street, PO Box 70, Burlington, VT 05402

Healthy Eating Guidelines for Worksites



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Healthy Eating Guidelines for Worksites

Why offer healthy foods at meetings, conferences and seminars?

The physical and social environment of the workplace influences health-related behaviors. Work is where many people spend most of their time; therefore, food available at a person's workplace frequently determines what they eat throughout the day. Workplace gatherings can promote healthier food choices by following the recommendations put forth by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans by offering:

- More fruits and vegetables
- Non- or low-fat milk products
- Whole grains
- Foods low in saturated and trans fats
- Smaller serving sizes (see page 8 for examples of proper serving sizes)

General guidelines:

- Emphasize fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy and lean protein sources
- Offer low-fat and low-calorie foods
- Serve smaller portions of higher calorie foods (e.g. mini, halved or quartered bagels, muffins or cookies)
- Include a vegetarian option with meals and snacks
- Offer seasonal and local foods when possible (see page 7)
- Use lower fat versions of condiments (e.g. dressings, mayo, cream cheese, sour cream, dips)
- For mid-morning and mid-afternoon meetings, consider serving only beverages
- Serve low-fat or skim milk with coffee and tea
- Offer water with meals and snacks
- If registration forms are used, provide space to indicate food allergies or dietary restrictions



Whole Grains Tip:

When buying whole-grain products, the first or second ingredient must list "whole" before the grain (e.g. whole wheat, whole oats, whole corn meal, whole rye). Wheat, rye, pumpernickel, 12-grain and multi-grain breads are not necessarily whole grains.



Menu Ideas for Meetings and Conferences

Employers can make it easier for people to make healthy food choices by providing healthy food at meetings and other events they sponsor. Here are sample menus that offer healthy foods.

Breakfast

- Fruit pieces (offer seasonal, local fruit whenever possible)
- Low- or non-fat yogurt
- Small muffins (2-3oz) or large muffins cut in half (look for whole-grain muffins)
- 100% whole-grain bread and/or whole-grain English muffins
- Whole-grain cereals (serve with skim or 1% milk)
- Mini whole-grain bagels or larger bagels cut in half

Spreads to offer:

- Single servings of peanut butter, jam, jelly, low-fat cream cheese, trans fat free spread

Beverages:

- Bottled water
- Skim or 1% milk
- Coffee and tea (offer skim and 1% milk)

Mid-morning meetings

Consider only serving beverages (see beverage list on page 4).

Lunch

- Low-sodium meat-based broth or low-sodium vegetable-based soup
- Green or vegetable salad (offer light vinaigrettes or low-fat dressings on the side)
- Pasta or rice salad (made with light vinaigrettes or low-fat dressings)
- Potato salad (use combination of low-fat mayo and yogurt, and dress lightly)
- Whole-grain rolls with trans fat free spread (if offering butter, use single-serving packets)
- Pizza (choose vegetable topping and avoid pepperoni, sausage and extra cheese)



Sandwich Ideas:

- Whole-grain breads, rolls, wraps (cut sandwiches in half for smaller portions)
- Lean roast beef, lean poultry without skin, ham, tuna fish with low-fat mayo, hummus (always offer a vegetarian choice)
- 1oz slices of reduced-fat cheese
- Vegetable toppings
- Packets of mustard and low-fat mayo

Beverages:

- Bottled water
- Unsweetened iced tea
- Flavored water (no sugar)
- Skim or 1% milk
- Coffee and tea (offer skim and 1% milk)

Menu Ideas for Meetings and Conferences

Mid-afternoon meetings

Consider only serving beverages.

Snack ideas:

- Baked chips with salsa
- Fruit pieces or fruit salad
- Low- or non-fat yogurt
- Raw veggies with low-fat dip, hummus and/or bean dip
- Whole-grain pita bread with hummus and/or bean dip
- Whole-grain crackers with cheese (1oz portions of cheese)
- Dried fruit with and without nuts
- Pretzels and plain popcorn

Beverages:

- Bottled water
- Unsweetened iced tea
- Flavored water (no sugar)
- Skim or 1% milk
- Coffee and tea (offer skim and 1% milk)

Snack Tip:

Consider not offering food at staff meetings. Calories from one extra bagel per week equals to a weight gain of 5 pounds per year.



Dinner

Work with the conference center or caterer to select entrées that have less than 15 grams of fat per serving and always include a vegetarian option.

- Green or vegetable salad (with light vinaigrettes or low-fat dressings on the side)
- Whole-grain rolls with trans fat free spread (if offering butter, use single-serving packets)
- Pasta with marinara sauce
- Lean meats, skinless poultry, fish or tofu that is grilled, broiled, roasted or baked
- Serve at least two vegetables with meals (e.g. steamed vegetables, salad)
- Request seasonal and local vegetables (avoid butter and cream sauces)

Beverages:

- Bottled water
- Unsweetened iced tea
- Flavored water (no sugar)
- Skim or 1% milk
- Coffee and tea (offer skim and 1% milk)

Dessert

- Fresh fruit pieces or fruit salad (with low-fat yogurt dip)
- Angel food cake with fruit topping
- Low-fat ice cream or frozen yogurt, sherbet or sorbet
- If cookies are offered, consider whole-grain cookies such as oatmeal or offer lower-fat varieties and smaller sizes (2–3oz)
- If cake is offered, cut into 2" squares

Making Healthier Food Choices

Conference centers and caterers should be willing to work with you or your planning committee to develop a healthy menu. Use the list below as a guide when talking to the chef or caterer. These guidelines are appropriate for meetings off-site or in the office.

	BEST	GOOD	LIMIT / AVOID
BEVERAGES	skim or 1% milk fat-free half & half soy milk (unflavored) tea coffee water sugar-free flavored water unsweetened iced tea	2% milk fruit juice 100% fruit or vegetable juice in 8oz containers diet soda	regular soda whole milk and cream sweetened tea lemonade sweetened fruit drinks sports drinks energy drinks
FRUIT	fresh frozen canned in own juice	canned in light syrup dried	canned in heavy syrup sweetened canned fruit
VEGETABLES	all fresh or frozen without added fat and sauces low-sodium vegetable-based broth or soup soups made with vegetable puree or skim milk	canned stir-fried but not battered oven-baked potatoes vegetable-based broth or soup	fried battered served with cheese or butter sauce cream-based soups (such as cream of broccoli)

Making Healthier Food Choices

	BEST	GOOD	LIMIT / AVOID
MILK & MILK PRODUCTS	skim milk non-fat cream non-fat yogurt low-fat and part skim cheese fat-free cream cheese fat-free or low-fat cottage cheese	1% milk low-fat or whipped cream cheese low-fat yogurt low-fat cheese	whole milk and cream full-fat cheese and cream cheese processed cheese spread
BREADS, CEREALS & PASTAS	whole-grain or whole wheat: rolls, bread, English muffins or bagels low-fat granola and granola bars whole-grain cereal oatmeal whole-grain pasta brown rice	white: rolls, bread, English muffins or bagels mini-muffins unsweetened cereals grits pancakes French toast white pasta and rice corn bread	Danishes croissants doughnuts sweet rolls large muffins pastries sweetened cereals pasta with cheese, meat or Alfredo sauce pasta salad made with mayonnaise or creamy dressing crackers made with trans fat (see page 10)
MEAT, POULTRY, FISH, EGGS, BEANS & NUTS	extra-lean ground meat trimmed beef and pork skinless chicken and turkey tuna canned in water grilled, broiled, roasted or baked fish and shellfish beans split peas lentils tofu egg whites egg substitute	lean ground beef meat stir-fried in olive oil low-sodium and low-fat lunch meats broiled hamburgers Canadian bacon low-fat hot dogs tuna canned in oil nuts whole eggs cooked without added fat	fried meat or fish untrimmed beef and pork bacon sausage pepperoni ribs hot dogs chicken and turkey with skin lunch meats whole eggs cooked with fat

Making Healthier Food Choices

	BEST	GOOD	LIMIT / AVOID
CONDIMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> catsup mustard vinegar Tabasco® non-fat or low-fat dressings non-fat cream cheese 100% fruit jam trans fat free margarine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> whipped margarine and butter jelly low-fat mayonnaise oil-based dressings peanut butter low-fat sour cream 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> stick margarine and butter mayonnaise cream cheese creamy dressings sour cream gravy tartar sauce cream sauce cheese sauce
DESSERTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> frozen fruit juice bars ice milk bars low-fat frozen yogurt and ice cream sherbet sorbet fig bars ginger snaps fresh fruit pieces or fruit salad with low-fat yogurt dip angel food cake with fruit topping whole-grain cookies such as oatmeal (or lower-fat varieties) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> dark chocolate cocoa cakes and pies cut into 2" squares 2-3oz cookies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cookies and cakes pies cheese cake ice cream milk or white chocolate candy



Offering Seasonal and Local Foods at Conferences and Meetings

Why use seasonal and local foods?

- It supports our local community, economy and agriculture, and protects Vermont's farmland.
- It is better for the environment. Seasonal and local foods do not need artificial heat and light to create year-round growing conditions. Traditional systems of local farming are often small and diverse, reducing the need for synthetic pesticides, herbicides and artificial fertilizers. Additionally, fewer fossil fuels are burned on foods that travel short distances from farm to table and don't require as much packaging for transport.
- Food tastes better in season.
- Food in season can be less expensive, especially if you buy in bulk or purchase "seconds" (produce that is cosmetically damaged, but otherwise just fine).
- Local foods require less travel time; they'll be fresher and taste better, and are bred for taste, not for durability on the road. When food tastes better, you don't need to add calories, salt and fat in the form of sauces to increase flavor.
- Local producers and processors usually do not add preservatives or other artificial ingredients.

Remember to ask the chef to use local foods. Most hotels and conference centers will accommodate when asked. Here are some simple-to-serve, easy-to-find local items:

- Milk
- Cider
- Cream for coffee
- Yogurt
- Cheese
- Fresh vegetables (in season)
- Garden salad (in season)
- Fresh fruit (in season – apples most of the year)
- Local beef, chicken, turkey, pork, lamb, sausage, lunchmeat
- Honey (as tea sweetener and spread) and maple syrup
- Butter
- Herbs (garnish, salad, seasoning)

For more detailed information on substituting local ingredients into common meeting and conference menus, visit the "Buy Local/ Buy Vermont" section at www.vermontagriculture.com or call (802) 828-2416.

The Vermont Fresh Network can also be a great resource for chefs and customers who want to do more with local foods. Their mission is to connect local farmers with local restaurants. You can find out more and search their membership at www.vermontfresh.net.



Visualize a Serving Size

When cutting food to serve at meetings or when discussing menus with chefs, visualize these standard serving sizes to help keep portions in check.



3 ounces of meat: size of a deck of cards



3 ounces of fish: size of a checkbook



1 ounce of cheese: size of four dice



1 medium potato: size of a computer mouse



2 tablespoons of peanut butter: size of a ping pong ball



1 teaspoon of butter or margarine: size of the tip of your thumb



1 cup of pasta: size of a tennis ball



1 cup of mashed potatoes or broccoli: size of your fist



1 average bagel: size of a hockey puck



1 ounce of nuts or dried fruit: size of a golf ball

References

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & U.S. Department of Agriculture (2005)
Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2015 (updated)
Available at: www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015.asp

University of Minnesota School of Public Health (2004)
Guidelines for Offering Healthy Foods at Meetings, Seminars and Catered Events
Available at: <http://z.umn.edu/healthyfoods>

New York State Department of Health Center for Community Health (2004)
Guidelines for Healthy Meetings
Available at: www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/prevent/guidelines.htm



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