

National Obesity Action Forum
Discussion Table Notes
12:45 – 1:30 PM, Tuesday June 6th, 2006

Table Discussion Topic: Workplace **Facilitator:** Rosa Myers

Issue: What are good methods of initiating a workplace wellness initiative?

Discussion/Solution: Lunch and Learns; offering employee incentives such as discounts to gyms, dance workshops, and yoga, Pilates and aerobics classes; offering health insurance incentives for people who participate in worksite wellness programs (lower co-pays and discounts like \$10 - \$20 off premiums for participants), or offering employees points toward lower premiums if they lower BMI and tobacco use, and increase physical activity and seat belt use; partner with women's programs; encourage stair use by decorating on stairs; encourage smoking cessation by making sites smoke free.

Model worksite programs: HELP Program, which is an ongoing state employee wellness program; Healthier Fitness Challenge; USDA monthly events; Passport to Wellness, which is key with the City of Philadelphia because participants receive discounts for participating, and the PA Worksite Wellness Committee. One service the Committee provides employers are examples of healthy foods choices.

Challenges to overcome:

- Many employers don't offer programs because they don't believe employees will want to participate in competitive incentive programs.
- High staff turnover
- Employers who penalize employees who take time to participate in wellness programs. Employers should offer employees up to three days off of work to participate in state wellness programs.
- Employee fear of revealing an underlying condition to employers if they participate
- A variety of wellness programs exist nationwide, but there is no central coordination. A solution to this may be to tie programs to "months" (e.g. Food Safety Month, National Nutrition Month) and offer specials during each month, such as gym specials and healthy taste-offs during National Nutrition Month.

Questions to ponder:

- How does obesity affect workers?
- Has anyone worked with child daycare workers to improve fitness/nutrition?

- Does the employer train/pay for training?
- Does the employer provide a wellness coordinator or wellness team?