Workplace Wellness
What It Is And Why It Is Important To All of Us

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**Workplace Wellness:**
What It Is And Why It Is Important to All of Us

As an employer or employee you may already be aware that ‘Wellness’ is the new buzz word of the health care industry and more importantly, the workplace. But what exactly is Wellness? And how can we incorporate it in the Workplace?

- **By definition Workplace Wellness is:**
  
  “…an organized, employer-sponsored program that is designed to support employees as they adopt and sustain behaviors that reduce health risks, improve quality of life, enhance personal effectiveness, and benefit the organization’s bottom line.”

- **Why is Workplace Wellness important?**
  
  A study completed by Summit Health and the University of Michigan determined that nearly 50% of an organization’s profits are consumed by employee health care costs and a ‘high risk’ employee can cost an organization almost $3,000 more per year than their ‘low risk’ colleagues. In addition, ‘high risk’ employees are shown to be 18% less productive, which accumulates to 7 hours per week or 2 months per year in lost productivity.

- **As an employer, why should I pursue an initiative for Workplace Wellness?**
  
  Based on research completed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, they found that employers spend around $8,000 annually on each of their employee’s medical care, which includes medical insurance, disability, and worker’s compensation. For the employers who seek out and implement a Workplace Wellness program, they find, on average, medical costs fall by about $3.27 for every dollar spent on Wellness programs, and absentee days fall by about $2.73 for every dollar spent. Other studies have also shown that Workplace Wellness programs can reduce sick leave by 28%, medical costs by 26%, and 30% among worker’s compensation claims.

- **ROI vs.VOI**
  
  While many decision makers within organizations want to see a well-documented return on investment (ROI) for implementing some version of Workplace Wellness strategies, they are beginning to transition to the broader value of investment (VOI). Before, the only figures needed to make a decision were based on the financial indicators, while now the key decision makers are looking to justify their decisions based on the following:

  - Financial indicators/net savings
  - Participation indicators
  - Preventive screening indicators
  - Health risk indicators
  - Clinical indicators
  - Utilization indicators
  - Productivity indicators
  - Shareholder value

**EXPERIENCE. BETTER CARE.**
• Employers have tremendous opportunity to help their employees

While changing behavior is solely on the employees, employers have a tremendous opportunity to help their employees see the value of adopting healthier behaviors so they can live healthier lives. Essentially, an employer’s culture sets the tone for its employees and a supportive work environment, where management reinforces a sound wellness strategy, can keep employees motivated and engaged.

Workplace Wellness programs can be used to drive and influence healthy behaviors, bringing benefits to the employer, the employee, and to the community.

• Health benefits of Workplace Wellness programs

Workplace Wellness programs should be viewed as an investment in a business’ most important asset, its employees. Studies continually show that employees are more likely to perform well when they are in optimal health. Additionally, benefits from implementing Workplace Wellness can include:

- Attracting talented workers
- Reducing absenteeism
- Improving on-the-job utilization
- Improving employee morale
- Reducing turnover
- Improved disease management

• Integrating Wellness into your business strategy

Strengthening the organization’s culture, employee loyalty, and decreasing overall health care costs are the benefits when a wellness program is integrated into the business strategy. Employers need to look beyond health care benefits as a cost to be managed, but rather to the benefits of good health as an investment to be leveraged5.

Optimal health is not only of great value to individuals and populations, but also to businesses and industries. Ultimately, a healthier, more productive workforce can help drive greater profitability for employers as well as a healthier economy for our nation5. In the end it is all about personal responsibility and supporting the individual to become their own coach for health management. It is vital to invest in a culture of health as an individual, as a family, as an employer, as a community, as a state and as a nation6.

For more information regarding Workplace Wellness and how it can benefit your organization, please feel free to contact Jacob Wayman with Kansas City Internal Medicine’s Corporate Medicine and Wellness Division at 913-319-7308.

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