

# Be a City with a Healthy Workforce

Every city wants a healthy workforce. Health care costs are lower, productivity is higher, and morale is better. Recognizing that healthy people work in healthy places, municipalities are examining their workplace policies to see what options exist to facilitate healthy environments for their employees.

For every dollar invested by employers in workplace wellness programs, there was an average savings of more than \$3.<sup>1</sup>

Health care costs are an increasing burden on municipal budgets. Those costs could be reduced if fewer employees suffered from the chronic diseases related to overweight and obesity.

Preventable chronic diseases, such as diabetes and heart disease, account for more than 75% of all health care expenditures.<sup>2</sup> Nationally, the economic cost of obesity is over \$215 billion per year.<sup>3</sup>

To improve the health of their workforce and stem their costs from medical care utilization, injury, and lost productivity, many cities and towns are adopting workplace wellness policies to create environments where making healthy choices is easy for their staff members.

This fact sheet offers strategies that municipalities can take to make the initial commitment to employee health and wellness. Once cities and towns have taken the steps outlined in this fact sheet, an additional fact sheet provides additional guidance to institute specific nutrition, physical activity, and breastfeeding policies.

1. Fit Together NC. Workplace Wellness. Retrieved May 5, 2009, from <http://fittogethernc.org/WorkplaceWellness.aspx>

2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2004. Chronic disease overview. Retrieved April 30, 2009 from <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/overview.htm>.

3. Hammond, R.A., & Levine, R. (2010). The economic impact of obesity in the United States. *Diabetes, Metabolic Syndrome and Obesity: Targets and Therapy*, 3, 285-295. DOI: 10.2147/DMSOTT.S7384



The **Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) Cities & Towns Campaign** provides free technical assistance and coaching to help city officials adopt policies that improve their communities' physical activity and food environments. Supporting healthy choices is essential to address the obesity epidemic.

The HEAL Cities & Towns Campaign for the Mid-Atlantic is part of a growing national campaign that is currently taking place in Cali-

fornia, Oregon, and Colorado. The Institute for Public Health Innovation embarked on this initiative with funding from Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of the Mid-Atlantic States and a strategic partnership with the Maryland & Virginia Municipal Leagues.

*This fact sheet is one in a series providing background information and policy ideas for healthy cities and towns.*

## Make the Commitment to Employee Health and Wellness:

### 1. Gather Support

Is there top-level support for workplace wellness?

**YES!** Proceed to step two.  **NO**

1. Complete an [assessment](#) of leadership's support
2. Initiate conversations with employees who have expressed interest in their personal health and wellness. Look for others, especially those in management, who can be champions.
3. Consult with others in your organization and gather data to make the case. Data that are especially powerful include medical claims costs related to obesity and chronic disease, how the organization's medical claims are trending over time, and utilization of sick leave.
4. Look to similar municipalities that have successfully implemented workplace wellness initiatives to find out how they overcame their barriers to gathering support.
5. Along with your champions, share your findings with the appropriate committees and executives.

### 2. Form a Workplace Wellness Committee

Does your municipality have a committee that is devoted to employee health and wellness efforts?

**YES!** Proceed to step three.  **NO**

1. Utilize your municipality's processes to initiate a formal committee, and get all permissions needed. Find out how much work time and how many employees can be allocated to the committee.
2. Identify people in the organization who will be engaged and serve as role models to others, including those champions from Step 1.
3. Ensure that the committee is representative of the workforce by including people from a variety of departments and work schedules. Consider including an executive; representatives from HR, Parks & Rec, Benefits, and Marketing; and someone with a health/wellness background.
4. Identify a Chair for the committee. It may be best for this person to have a background in wellness.
5. Develop a monthly or quarterly meeting schedule

### 3. Adopt a Workplace Wellness Policy

Does your municipality already have a policy that formalizes the wellness committee and formalizes the municipality's commitment to health and wellness?

**YES!** Proceed to step four.  **NO**

1. Review the [policy template](#) with the committee. Make any necessary changes.
2. Utilize your municipality's processes to adopt the policy. Workplace wellness policies are often housed in Human Resources.



### 4. Adopt Nutrition and Physical Activity Policies

1. Review additional HEAL Cities & Towns fact sheets at [www.healcitiesmidatlantic.org](http://www.healcitiesmidatlantic.org), which outlines how to adopt policies in the areas of healthy meetings, active stairwells, healthy vending, breastfeeding, and more!
2. Check-out the HEAL Cities & Towns webinars:
  - ⇒ [Creating Healthy Food Access in Municipal Workplaces One Bite at a Time](#)
  - ⇒ [Creating a Culture of Wellness in Municipal Workplaces: Moving Beyond the Health Fair and the Fun Run](#)
  - ⇒ [How Worksite Wellness Can Support Physical Activity and Nutrition](#)
  - ⇒ [Nutrition Standards for Beverages and Food Sold and Served in City Facilities, Programs and Events](#)
  - ⇒ [Leading by Example: Nutrition Standards for Food & Beverages](#)

#### Join the HEAL Cities & Towns Campaign

Go to [www.healcitiesmidatlantic.org](http://www.healcitiesmidatlantic.org), learn about policy options, let us know what you are doing, and/or contact Sydney Daigle, HEAL Cities & Towns Campaign Manager: [Sdaigle@institutephi.org](mailto:Sdaigle@institutephi.org),