

# Track Three: Moving Forward

Ideas in this track will be more complex and provide ideas to help employees increase or maintain their recommended levels of physical activity while fostering a sense of teamwork across the company.

- ➔ Sponsor a walking competition.
- ➔ Walk and talk meetings.
- ➔ Wellness exams.
- ➔ Physical activity and fitness coaching.

*“Adults have many options for becoming physically active, increasing their physical activity, and staying active throughout their lives. In deciding how to meet the Guidelines, adults should think about how much physical activity they’re already doing and how physically fit they are. Personal health and fitness goals are also important to consider.”*

*- 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*

## Sponsor a Walking Competition

**How it works:** Invite employees to join a team or walk on their own. Encourage employees to find a walking buddy. Each participant enters their daily or weekly walking totals (in number of steps or miles). The employee who walks the most or improves the most wins a prize.

**Whom it affects:** All employees.

**Why it works:** Encouraging employees to walk regularly helps to get them in the habit of regular physical activity.

**What it takes:**

- Pedometers.
- Walking route maps.
- Distance tracking forms.
- Prizes or incentives for participation.

Use a variety of ways to promote the competition (see **Step 3: Promoting** for more ideas). Have a member of senior management participate and encourage participation, or challenge employees to meet a certain mileage mark. Once the competition starts, send regular reminders with motivational messages to keep employees committed to the competition. Have prizes for those teams or individuals who logged the most miles.

Use the distance tracking templates in the *Tools and Templates* section or create your own; these templates can be used “as is” or can be customized with your company’s logo or other information.

**Evaluation:** Track the number of participants, and ask participants to complete a 5-minute survey when the competition is over.

## Steps to Physical Activity - Step 4: Implementing

### Walk and Talk Meetings

**How it works:** Encourage employees to walk during small group meetings that do not require technology or note taking. Use interior hallways (as appropriate), outside sidewalks, or walking paths. Ensure the meeting is at least 10 minutes long and the walking is brisk for employees to meet the recommended levels of physical activity.

**Whom it affects:** Walk and talk meetings affect all employees. Be sensitive to those who may have disabilities or conditions that could prohibit participation.

**Why it works:** Employees are able to get moving while doing necessary work. When modeled by senior leadership, staff will be more likely to consider a walk and talk meeting instead of a traditional meeting in a conference room.

**What it takes:** A walk and talk meeting requires an agenda to keep everyone on track, comfortable shoes, water, a destination or route to follow, and a sense of adventure.

**Evaluation:** Request informal feedback after each meeting. Conduct a more formal evaluation by using an employee questionnaire annually. Include a question or two about location of trails and distance, as well as comfort level in participating in such meetings.



## Wellness Exams

**How it works:** Employees are screened for selected health conditions. If a company is sponsoring or promoting physical activity programs in the workplace, a health screening can be conducted to help employees feel that they are medically able to participate. This may include checking blood pressure and resting heart rate. However, the *2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans* state that physical activity is safe for almost everyone, and the health benefits of physical activity far outweigh the risks. People without diagnosed chronic conditions (*e.g.*, diabetes, heart disease, or osteoarthritis) or symptoms (*e.g.*, chest pain or pressure, dizziness, or joint pain) generally do not need to consult with a health care provider about participating in physical activity. Wellness exams help employees understand more about their health and have the potential to uncover previously undetected conditions.

Depending on the resources available, the types of screenings can be expanded to include the following:

- Health Risk Appraisal (HRA).
- Body Mass Index (BMI).
- General blood work.
- Cholesterol.
- Diabetes.
- Cancer.
- Thyroid.
- Skin.
- Vision.
- Hearing.

If you plan on collecting specific information gained from the wellness exams for any reason (*e.g.*, baseline data, insurance premium reduction), please be certain to work with your human resources and legal departments to ensure information collected complies with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) privacy and security rules. For more on HIPAA privacy and security rules, please visit: <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/understanding/index.html>

## Steps to Physical Activity - Step 4: Implementing

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**Whom it affects:** Wellness exams affect employees who voluntarily participate.

**Why it works:** Offering opportunities for employees to take part in wellness exams may encourage them to be more invested in their health. It can provide incentive for them to take part in physical activities. Even the most physically fit individual may have an unseen condition that may not be detected without screening.



**What it takes:** Depending on your budget, the company can partner with a local clinic or an insurance company-recommended provider to perform specific screenings. If you are looking at only blood pressure and resting heart rate, check with your local health department to see if they offer onsite screenings. Be prepared to provide your employees with information should something be uncovered. Many national organizations have free material to help individuals learn more about conditions. Consult with the person administering the exam for what information should be available and where employees can go for further information.

Check with your local Red Cross chapter about holding a blood drive—this can accomplish two things at once. All donors get their blood pressure and heart rate checked as part of the donation process, and your company can help replenish the local blood supply.

**Evaluation:** Administer a questionnaire to participants to understand what additional screenings they would take. In addition, ask individuals how they used the information they received. Consider asking employees about future physical activity programs they would be interested in having as part of the program.

## Personal Fitness Training and Coaching

**How it works:** When resources allow for it, hire a physical activity or fitness coach to work with employees. It can help employees have the appropriate training to know how to do the activities safely.

**Whom it affects:** Personal fitness training affects all employees who take advantage of the physical activity and fitness programs.

**Why it works:** Individuals who take on a new physical activity or fitness program without knowing how to do the activities or exercises properly are at risk of harming themselves. Some individuals are afraid of beginning new exercise programs or trying all the different exercise machines and equipment. By offering physical activity and fitness coaching, employees become more informed on how to incorporate physical activity and exercise into their lives in small, measured steps. They can be shown how to be safe, reducing the chance of injuries and possibly increasing the participation rate.

**What it takes:** If your worksite has an exercise room, consider bringing in a trainer to work with employees on a regular basis. Trainer can work with the individual employees to develop their SMART Wellness Goals (See *Tools and Templates*) and help them track their progress over time.

If your company does not have an on-site facility but rather contracts with a fitness center near your location, consider having physical activity and fitness coaching as

### Wellness Coaching

Different from Fitness Coaching, wellness coaching looks at all aspects of employee health. Wellness coaches can provide not only advice on physical activity and fitness, but also work with the employees on reading and interpreting Health Risk Assessments (HRAs) and other wellness exams, healthy eating habits and nutrition, and other areas of general wellness. Wellness coaching sessions can be face-to-face or over the telephone, depending on the type of Wellness Coach hired or the available resources.

## Steps to Physical Activity - Step 4: Implementing

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part of the contract. This will allow all employees who take advantage of the center to be able to work with the trainer. Apply this approach to subsidized fitness plans as well. If you reimburse for an employee's health club membership, consider reimbursing for fitness coaching sessions as part of the contract. Depending on your budget, these could be done once a year, once a month or as frequently as desired.

If funding is limited, consider group coaching instead of individual coaching. This can offer the same transfer of knowledge from coach to individuals, but may not allow for the same level of personal attention. Consider grouping individuals on the basis of wellness goals and preferences. These groups could then form the nexus of fitness clubs for future team competitions.

**Evaluation:** Evaluate the program annually. Track the number of participants. Ask how often they met with the trainer. Have them evaluate the trainer. Ask if they are meeting their wellness goals. And review any fitness center contacts you may have annually to ensure physical activity and fitness coaching is provided.

### In this step...

- A champion takes active part in the activities and encourages the company's leadership to do the same.
- The wellness committee puts their plans into place and leads the activities and programs.