

Track Four: Keeping the Pace

Ideas in this section are complex and focus on all areas of the workplace. This is the place to come if your worksite already has a wellness program. It offers ideas and projects that can serve as resources to your wellness committee as you look to expand your company's offerings.

- ➔ Create an employee walking club.
- ➔ Create wellness teams and extended competitions.
- ➔ Partner with your community.
- ➔ Identify and create safe walking routes.
- ➔ Environmental strategies.

“Adults who are already active and meet the minimum guidelines (the equivalent of 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity every week) can gain additional and more extensive health and fitness benefits by increasing physical activity above this amount. Most American adults should increase their aerobic activity to exceed the minimum level and move toward 300 minutes a week. Adults should also do muscle-strengthening activities on at least 2 days each week.

One time-efficient way to achieve greater fitness and health goals is to substitute vigorous-intensity aerobic activity for some moderate-intensity activity. Using the 2-to-1 rule of thumb, doing 150 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity a week provides about the same benefits as 300 minutes of moderate intensity activity.”

- 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans

Steps to Physical Activity - Step 4: Implementing

Create an Employee Walking Club

How it works: A small group or groups are created to walk together during breaks, lunch, or other approved times. Participants convene at regular times to walk anywhere from 2 – 3 times per week to daily. Routes are preplanned but can vary from day to day and can have a destination (*e.g.*, walking to a weekly farmers' market). If possible, do a walkability assessment of the different routes to ensure appropriateness and safety (for more on Walkability Assessments, see **Step 2: Planning and Assessing**).

Whom it affects: Walking clubs affect all employees who choose to actively participate.

Why it works: Walking is an easy way to be physically active and most people can participate.



What it takes: Walking clubs need the following: a planning committee to determine the walking route or routes; maps showing distances of the routes, (this can be generated from online mapping programs); promotional information on the walking club; prizes and rewards for those participating in the club; a kick-off event; and ongoing support from the champion and wellness committee.

Evaluation: Keep records of who attends each walk to be able to track increases or decreases in participation. Have a bi-annual questionnaire to determine participant satisfaction, appropriateness of the route(s) and any other factors the participants want to share.

For more information on Walking Clubs, visit: <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Documents/Network-FV-WP-WalkingClubTool.pdf>

Create Wellness Teams and Extended Competitions

How it works: Employees create teams (based around internal departments or across departments) to train together and participate in a series of planned competitions. Depending on the number of events, the teams can remain together for several months to more than a year, competing against other teams along the way. The team that wins the most competitions by the end of the program is declared the winner. In addition, individuals within the teams can be recognized for their achievements, such as most participation or most improved.

Whom it affects: Wellness teams affect all employees who participate.

Why it works: Because they are interacting and working as a team, individual employees work to support their team members to achieve their individual goals and the recommended amount of physical activity.

What it takes: Having wellness teams that compete against each other requires coordination on multiple levels. Team members should organize to ensure all individuals participate. The Wellness Committee should plan a series of competitive activities. These activities can stand alone and be scheduled periodically or they can build upon each other, culminating in a challenge event between teams.

Some ideas for competition are:

- Extended walking challenge.
- Stairwell challenge.
- Office olympics.
- Fitness field day.

Evaluation: Each individual event or activity should be evaluated separately, with an additional evaluation at the end of the larger competition. Questions should be asked about how the competitions help individuals achieve their physical activity goals. Additional questions should be asked about the value of longer-term teams and the types of activities throughout the entire program.

Steps to Physical Activity - Step 4: Implementing

Partnering with Your Community

How it works: Physical activity programs create opportunities for your company to partner with the local community. Local organizations such as the YMCA or the local branch of the American Heart Association and health agencies are often eager to collaborate on activities that benefit the community. These can be one-time events or long-term relationships.

Whom it affects: Partnering with your community affects all employees who choose to actively participate, the surrounding community, or beneficiary agency.

Why it works: Your company is able to:

- Tap into or expand employees' existing social connections.
- Demonstrate corporate citizenship and social leadership.
- Promote the health of the community.

By connecting your programs to local organizations and agencies, all participants can benefit. Connecting to the community can be done in a relatively new program by having a kickoff event or in an existing program to increase sustainability and maintain interest. In addition, you can find existing programs the other organizations have and see how you can participate.

What it takes: Get to know your community. Become more knowledgeable about the community and its economic conditions, political structures, norms and values, demographic trends, history, and experience with business engagement efforts. Some of this knowledge can be gleaned by simply talking to other businesses or nonprofit businesses in the community. Connect with local hospitals and health agencies to understand community health issues and what community efforts already exist to promote physical activity in the community.

Evaluation: Consider evaluating how many new partnerships are established because of reaching out to the community. Determine how much time was dedicated to community outreach and document what the results of these efforts have been for promoting physical activity among employees and within the community. Share the results with employees and other key stakeholders in the community. Use this as an opportunity to share your corporate citizenship and social leadership.

Identify and Create Safe Walking Routes

How it works: Your company partners with the community to identify and create safe walking routes for all to use.

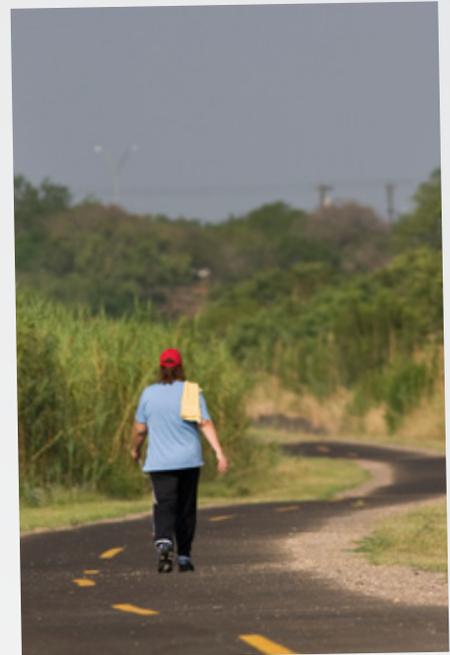
Whom it affects: Safe walking routes affect all employees and the community. By partnering with a local community organization, your company can build and create goodwill.

Why it works: Access to and promotion of a safe place to walk helps increase the likelihood that employees and the local community will make walking part of their regular routine and help them achieve the recommended levels of physical activity per week. This project can be an opportunity to publicize what you do within the larger community.

What it takes: This will vary from community to community and worksite to worksite. It may take land, tools, and volunteers to develop a trail. A pathway of brush and foliage may need to be cleared and other potential improvements, such as paving or wood-chipping may be needed to ensure routes are safe.

If your company owns its property, consider using part of the undeveloped land to create a trail. Work with your legal department to determine if public use is appropriate. If your company does not have property it can use, contact the local parks and recreation department to suggest a partnership to develop undeveloped municipal or county property near your office. Consider partnering with the Boy Scouts or Girls Scouts, YMCA, Big Brothers Big Sisters, or other community groups. Establish a planning committee to chart the path and determine what is needed to create route. Hold one or more work weekends to get the work done. Publicize the opening of the path in the local media, being sure to highlight both the partnership it took to create the trail as well as the health benefits the trail will provide to the local community.

If you do not have access to land that can be developed for a trail, do a walkability assessment of the area surrounding your worksite. Determine what routes are safe for employees to use. Share results with the local municipality and other companies in the area and determine if there are areas that can be improved for better walkability. Combine efforts to make these improvements, partnering with local organizations.



Steps to Physical Activity - Step 4: Implementing

Use internet mapping programs (e.g., Google Maps, Map My Run) to create maps for the safe walking routes, which include mileage for the different routes. Distribute these maps to employees and share with other businesses in the area. In addition, if you have permission, place mileage markers along the routes. Include information on the mileage markers about the *Physical Activity Guidelines*, reinforcing the concept of how many hours per week should be dedicated to physical activity.

Evaluation: Conduct a survey among employees about how often they use the new walking routes. If you are able, consider a paper survey and survey collection box along the walking routes (perhaps along with maps for the walking routes) to see what other groups or individuals may be using the routes. If you partnered with others to develop the safe walking routes, ask them how often they use the routes. Work with your community partners to do spot “man-on-the-street” surveys along the walking route to find out who is using the routes and why. Create a survey Web page and provide a link to it on the maps you create for the new walking routes.

Key Points for Partnering with the Community

- **Know what you want to do.** Before approaching a community or community-based organization it is important to articulate what you want to do, what you anticipate will be the outcome of your efforts, and who you want to impact.
- **Know whom to engage.** By knowing your community and what you want to do, you will already have a sense of who needs to be involved in the process and the best way to get them involved.
- **Identify and use community assets.** Community engagement is best sustained by identifying and mobilizing community resources and building the community’s capacity to take action for improved health.



Environmental Strategies

How it works: The wellness committee works with human resources and facilities management to implement a change based on the Company Policy Checklist (found in the *Tools and Templates* section). The change helps to make the work environment more conducive to physical activity and general wellness. Examples of changes include:

- Bike racks for employees who want to bicycle to work.
- Creating attractive and safe stairways to allow employees to walk between floors versus riding the elevators.
- Measuring distance in the hallway and making an internal walking lap within the building or facility.
- Creating an exercise facility on company property to encourage employees to use breaks, lunches, and time before or after work for exercise.
- Installing showers or changing facilities to allow employees who take advantage of alternative commute options or who are physically active during the day to shower or change clothes.

Whom it affects: Environmental strategies affect all employees.

Why it works: Changing the physical environment affords your employees more opportunities to be more physically active and shows them the commitment the company leadership is willing to make in investing in their health.

What it takes: Environmental strategies require assessments of what sort of physical changes can be made and estimates of the costs. Some are less expensive than others (*e.g.*, hallway laps, bike racks), and some can cost considerable amounts of money (*e.g.*, installing a fitness center). Get input from your employees through an Employees Needs Assessment, or do surveys to find out what sort of changes would help them be more physically active.

Evaluation: Survey employees to measure the number of participants and to find out how often they take advantage of the changes made. Ask if they have made their own changes based on the company's physical changes. For example, they now take the stairs after the stairs opened or ride their bikes to work a certain number of days a week after the bike racks were installed. Inquire what other changes may be required to sustain or increase interest.

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Family Involvement

Your programs can expand beyond your employees to their families as well. There are several ways you can involve families in your programs:

- **Lunch and Learn or After Work Activity Time** — Encourage your employees to invite their families to attend lunch and learn sessions or schedule the activity after work. Develop specific sessions that focus on activities families can do together to increase their physical activity levels. Consider having age appropriate activities at the lunch and learn for children who may attend the session.
- **Wellness Exams** — If you offer wellness exams to your employees, consider their families as well. Check your insurance policy or with your insurance carrier to see what may be covered when extending this type of program.
- **Fitness Center Memberships** — If you provide fitness center memberships to your employees, consider offering it to their families. Or offer a sliding compensation for family members who actively go to the centers.
- **Fitness or Wellness Coaching** — Consider offering Fitness or Wellness Coaching for family members. This can help them in creating and maintaining their own fitness goals and could help keep the employee active as well.
- **Walking and Other Fitness Competitions** — Open some of your competitions to family members, especially ones that measure physical activity outside of the workplace.



In addition, consider family fitness challenges. Create a family-oriented fitness event leading up to a company-wide family picnic or event. Whatever the competition, ensure that it is age appropriate to allow all family members to participate. At the company-wide event, recognize all participants and have awards for different age categories.

Encourage parents and care-givers to be role models for their children. The *2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans* recommends a minimum of 1 hour a day of physical activity for children.