

A Tool for Creating Healthier Workplace Environments

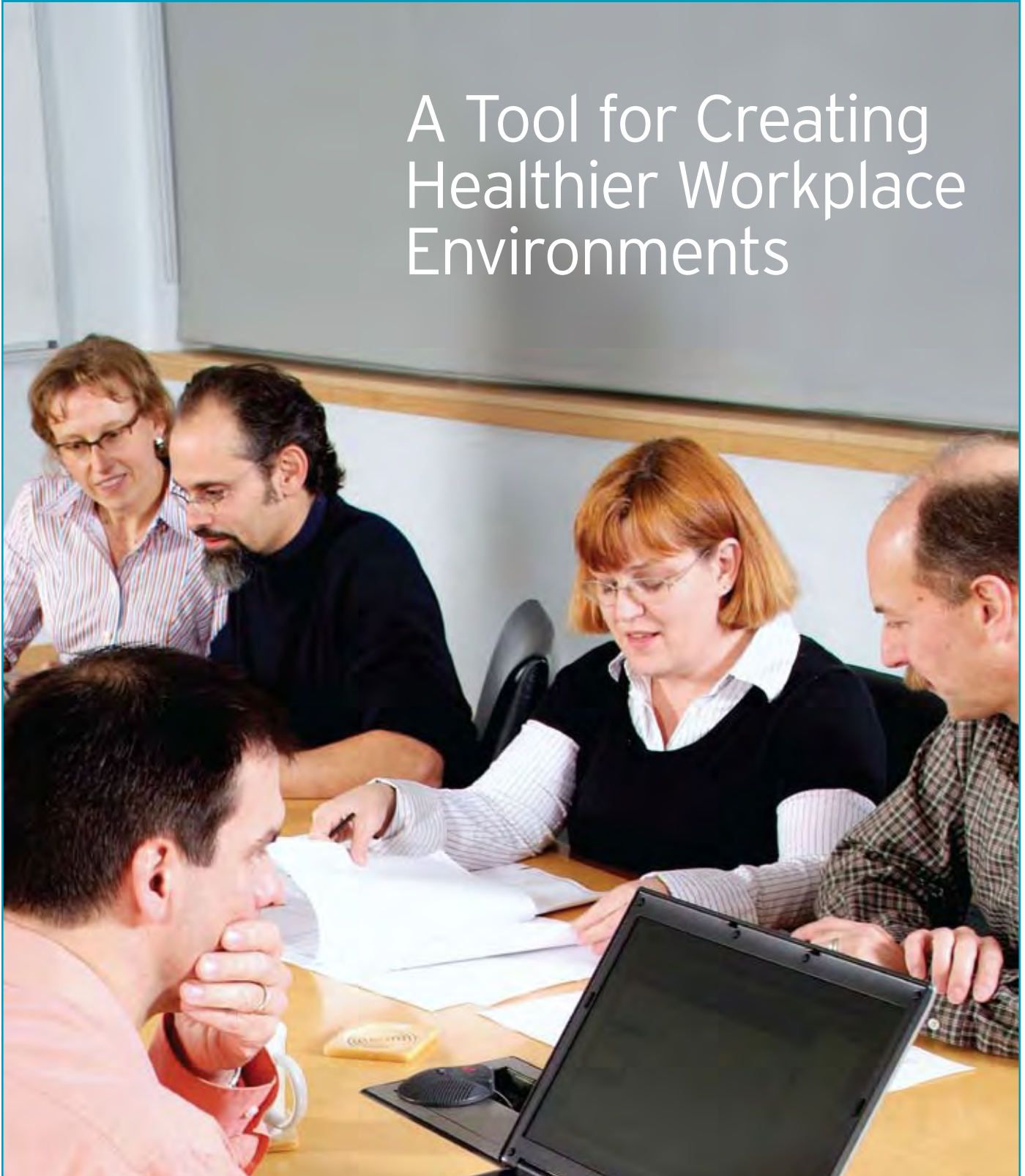


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Congratulations on your decision to create and implement a worksite wellness program at your organization. This resource, as part of the Fit and Healthy Vermonters Obesity Prevention Program, will guide you through the steps to help make your program a success. This Resource, as well as many other worksite wellness tools and resources, can be found at <http://healthvermont.gov/family/fit/worksitewellness.aspx>.

In addition to the general health and economic benefits, studies show the following benefits of worksite wellness programs:

- They are associated with decreased absenteeism, employee turnover, and health-care costs.
- Healthier employees spend fewer days away from work due to illness, saving the company thousands and even millions of dollars on downtime and temporary help.
- They can help employees manage their time and stress levels better, both of which are contributing factors to missed work days, and
- By sending the message that management cares about the general well-being of employees, morale and dedication to the company will increase.

In this Resource, you will find steps to aid in planning, developing, implementing, and evaluating a worksite wellness program, focusing on the major risk factors related to chronic disease: poor nutrition, physical inactivity and tobacco use. Breastfeeding resources are also provided because research supports breastfeeding as contributing to decreased obesity in children later in life. Finally, this step-by-step guide also includes examples of Vermont businesses that have successful worksite wellness programs.

There is no question that obesity and overweight are a burden to individuals, as well as our health care and economic systems:

- In Vermont, over half (56%) of adults are overweight or obese (2005). At the continued rate, this percentage will reach 61% by the year 2010.
- In the United States, poor diet and physical inactivity caused 365,000 deaths in 2000, making obesity the second leading cause of death in the US.
- Overweight and obesity increases the risk for many chronic health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, osteoarthritis, stroke, gallbladder disease and certain types of cancer.
- Adult obesity costs the state of Vermont approximately \$141 million dollars annually in health care costs (2204).
- Smoking continues to be the leading cause of preventable death in the United States, with about 750 Vermonters dying each year due to tobacco-related diseases.

Although treatment of obesity-related health conditions and tobacco use cessation are crucial, more initiatives are looking to prevention to promote optimal well-being and significantly reduce the burden to individuals, families, employers and states. Worksites are in a key position to lead these prevention efforts.

For more information call the Vermont Department of Health at 802-863-7330 or email <http://healthvermont.gov/contact/contact.aspx>.

Six Steps to a Worksite Wellness Program: Overview

Committee → Assessment → Goals → Planning → Implementation → Evaluation

Step 1: Form a committee or workgroup

How do I get started?

Read Step 1 for an overview of forming a wellness committee for the planning, programming and evaluation of your worksite wellness program. You'll learn about conducting effective meetings and getting management buy-in for the program.

Step 2: Assess needs, interests and resources of worksite

How healthy is my worksite? What are my employees looking for in a wellness program?

Step 2 discusses how to do an assessment of current wellness aspects in the company and as well as areas where there may be gaps. You will also learn how to find out what your employees want to get out of a worksite wellness program.

Step 3: Create goals and objectives

What are the goals and objectives I want the wellness program to accomplish?

Having clearly stated and measurable goals and objectives will keep the program well directed and organized, in addition to providing a standard for future evaluations.

Step 4: Plan activities to meet goals and objectives

What activities can I do?

This section provides tables with both Vermont and national resources for general health, physical activity, nutrition, tobacco cessation and breast-feeding interventions for you to get ideas of activities you can offer in your worksite. The strategies are divided into low, medium, and high resource needs, so you can quickly determine what you may be able to implement, or what may be too costly to include.

Step 5: Implement the program

How do I prioritize? How do I decide which activities are best to include?

There are many activities to choose from in implementing your wellness program. This section provides information and tools on prioritizing and setting up a plan to make it happen. Learn how policy and small environmental changes in the workplace can have a great impact on employee behavior with little or no cost.

Step 6: Evaluate and modify the program

Is it working? How can I tell if the wellness program is making an impact and meeting its goals and objectives?

Think about evaluation from the start of the wellness program. A well-documented evaluation will help identify areas where change is needed and can also justify a continued or bigger budget for program activities in the future. Different types of evaluations are described, and a sample tool is provided in this section.

Step 1: Form a Committee or Workgroup

Committee → Assessment → Goals → Planning → Implementation → Evaluation

Prior to assembling your workgroup, it is crucial to gain support from all levels of management. Inform the managers about the initiative to start a program, and encourage their participation. Be clear about the goals of the program, and present the staff and budget resources needed to ensure success. Focus on the benefits the entire organization will enjoy as described in the foreword of this kit: decreased absenteeism, increased morale and productivity, etc. Communication is essential for a thriving program. With the blessing of management, you are ready to form the committee or workgroup.

What are the functions of the workgroup?

- Assessing the health risks and current lifestyle behaviors of the organization
- Evaluating existing resources and gaps in service
- Planning and implementing the program
- Fiscal planning
- Establishing and enhancing relationships with other community organizations and government agencies
 - For example, consider partnering with environmental agencies and groups to encourage walking or biking to work. This increases physical activity and decreases pollution; a win-win situation.

Step 1: Form a Committee or Workgroup

Committee → Assessment → Goals → Planning → Implementation → Evaluation

Conduct meetings to assess the needs, interests and resources available.

Now that the workgroup or committee has been selected, it's time to hold meetings. It is crucial that these meetings are an effective use of staff time and resources, especially in the assessing and planning stages of development. The following are suggestions on how to conduct a smooth and constructive meeting environment:

- Designate a coordinator to manage the program and facilitate meetings.
- Select a minute taker, timekeeper.
- Meet on a regular basis; meetings may be more frequent in the initial planning stages.
- Regularly include new members and maintain a connection to management.
- Consider team leaders of smaller subcommittees depending on the size of the organization and scope of the program.
- Review a list of tasks to be done at each meeting.
- Make meetings fun!

Step 1: Form a Committee or Workgroup

Committee → Assessment → Goals → Planning → Implementation → Evaluation

So how much will it cost?

Cost will vary widely from company to company, depending on whether the employer or employee pays all costs or if the costs are shared. The Wellness Councils of America (WELCOA) estimates the cost per employee to be between \$100 and \$150 per year produce a return on investment of \$300 to \$450. Another note: more comprehensive programs will likely result in a greater return on investment due to lower healthcare costs and decreased absenteeism. Calculators are available to estimate the cost that certain lifestyle choices and chronic diseases have on your organization.

These can be found on the Centers for Disease Control website:

http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/hwi/program_design/cost_calculators.htm

One more thought...

If the task of planning, implementing, evaluating and modifying a worksite wellness program is beyond the resources afforded by your organization, contracting with an outside company to provide programming is also an option. The most important thing is to offer a beneficial program to the company and the opportunity for employees to make positive lifestyle changes. The Wellness Councils of America website provides a list of companies that provide programmatic management of worksite wellness programs. Follow the link to learn about what services are available: <http://www.welcoa.org/ppn.php>. Also, your local hospital likely provides programming tools and is a good resource for health expertise and technical assistance.

Continuing education opportunities

There are many professional continuing education opportunities for employees who would like to expand their knowledge on workforce health promotion, including workshops, seminars and certificates.

Please refer to the link from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/hwi/program_design/continuing_ed.htm

Step 1: Form a Committee or Workgroup

Committee → Assessment → Goals → Planning → Implementation → Evaluation

Vermont Success Story

RUTLAND HIGH SCHOOL

Ignited by the Department of Education's Coordinated School Health Initiative, **Rutland High School** (76 – 150 employees) internally publicized the formation of a wellness committee. This committee focuses on nutrition and physical activity initiatives for students, faculty and staff. School nurse, Ann Bannister, attributes the success of this committee to the representation of its members. In addition to "traditional" members, such as the nurse and health teacher, "nontraditional" members, such as special education teachers, social studies teachers and an employee of the finance office, have also become an integral part of the achievements of the wellness program. The committee meets regularly, once a month, after school hours and on volunteer time.



Step 2: Assess Needs, Interests and Resources of Worksite

Committee → **Assessment** → Goals → Planning → Implementation → Evaluation

With the workgroup assembled, and with knowledge of how to hold effective meetings, you are ready to assess your worksite, an integral step in the process.

Why do an assessment?

- To gather initial assessment results, which are used as a baseline measure for evaluation and can be compared to follow-up assessments in the future.
- To determine how current company policies either hinder or support healthy lifestyles.
- To generate recommendations to create a more supportive work environment.
- To measure employees' current lifestyle practices, needs, interests and specific health conditions.
- To identify different areas of support throughout the organization, in addition to external resources available.
- To increase employee interest in the wellness program.

Additional tips on assessment:

- Use the assessment as a starting point for your wellness initiative.
- Establish regular times the workgroup will meet to monitor progress for continuous improvement and accountability over time.
- Consider cultural factors that may impact the program (for example, the current employee attitude around healthy eating and being active).
- Get employee input in the form of surveys and focus groups.

Step 2: Assess Needs, Interests and Resources of Worksite

Committee → **Assessment** → Goals → Planning → Implementation → Evaluation

Worksite Wellness Assessment Checklist (Appendix A, p A-3)

This checklist provides a reference point of aspects in your organization that support a healthy lifestyle, as well as an overview of some of the items that should be considered when developing a comprehensive wellness program. The following components are included:

Six major categories:

- General
- Physical Activity
- Nutrition
- Tobacco Use
- Breastfeeding

Instructions for completing:

- **Status:** check whether you currently have (“Yes”), are planning (“In Process”) or do not have (“No”) the component. By subtotaling each of the columns and then totaling all the categories, you will have an idea of where your organization stands across all categories.
- **Potential Priority:** indicate which components you do not have or which ones will serve as your first areas on which to focus.

Step 2: Assess Needs, Interests and Resources of Worksite

Committee → **Assessment** → Goals → Planning → Implementation → Evaluation

Getting employee input

It is important to ascertain a good understanding of current employee behaviors and interest areas. This information will help you tailor the wellness program to your organization. Additionally, initial data gathered can serve as a baseline for future evaluation. There are many methods for collecting employee input:

- Employee survey ([Sample Worksite Wellness Survey, Appendix B, p A-13](#))
 - Make paper versions or computer/Internet versions available.
 - Make the survey as easy as possible and consider incentives or prizes to encourage completion
 - Examples:
 - Healthy Workforce 2010 (pages 62-64): www.prevent.org/images/stories/Files/publications/Healthy_Workforce_2010.pdf
 - Sample Worksite Wellness Survey (Appendix B, p A-10)
- Input from the workgroup or committee.
- Focus groups.

Step 2: Assess Needs, Interests and Resources of Worksite

Committee → **Assessment** → Goals → Planning → Implementation → Evaluation

Vermont Success Story

NORTHFIELD SAVINGS BANK

At **Northfield Savings Bank**, (76–150 employees) wellness is always on the mind of Work Center Manager, Timothy Barre. To gain the perspective of the bank employees, a “Needs and Interests Survey” was completed to aid in tailoring the wellness program. Additional ideas are generated from Internet resources. Barre states, “If there is a wellness resource out there, I’ll find it!” With a dedicated budget for wellness programs, the company subscribes to wellness newsletters, creates monthly quizzes and supports an annual exercise challenge program, complete with prizes.



Step 3: Create Goals and Objectives

Committee → Assessment → **Goals** → Planning → Implementation → Evaluation

Using the information gathered in the assessment step, you can now establish goals and objectives for the program. First, let's define goals and objectives.

- **Goals:** statements that describe in broad terms what is to be accomplished.
- **Objectives:** precise statements that describe the changes necessary to reach a goal.

Objectives state the expected amount of change in behavior, attitude, knowledge or condition to whom by when. The specificity of an outcome objective makes it different from a non-specific goal statement, although the goal statement is the first step in the crafting of a more specific objective. Objectives should:

- Have measurable language such as "increase" or "decrease."
- Identify a specific target population.
- Clearly identify the behavior, attitude, condition or knowledge to be changed.
- Establish the time frame within which an activity takes place.
- Determine the magnitude of the anticipated change (when possible).
- Contain a precise definition of the way change is measured.

Make Your Objectives "SMART"

- **Specific**
- **Measurable**
- **Achievable**
- **Realistic**
- **Time sensitive**

Step 3: Create Goals and Objectives

Committee → Assessment → **Goals** → Planning → Implementation → Evaluation

Goals and objectives can be formed during workgroup meetings. It is crucial that these goals are clearly stated and measurable in order to be used for continuous evaluation (evaluation is discussed in Step 6).

Examples:

Goal 1: Our workplace will offer food items in the cafeteria that align with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans

- Objective 1: By February 2008, a list of foods to be served will be generated.
- Objective 2: By March 2008, recipes will be modified with chef.
- Objective 3: By March 2008, cost estimates will be gathered from different vendors for the selected foods and ingredients.

Goal 2: Our workplace will promote an active lifestyle.

- Objective 1: By July 2008, a policy will be in place allowing flextime for physical activity.
- Objective 2: By August 2008, maps of nearby trails and walking routes will be provided to all employees.

Goal 3: Our workplace will be smoke free.

- Objective 1: By January 2008, a written policy will be in place prohibiting smoking anywhere on the property.
- Objective 2: By January 2008, promotional signs and paycheck stuffers will be distributed promoting the toll-free Vermont Quit Line (1-877-YES-QUIT).

Goal 4: Our workplace will be breastfeeding friendly.

- Objective 1: By February 2008, a written policy will be in place which supports a woman's choice to breastfeed and outlines the accommodations and benefits available to her.
- Objective 2: Educational packets about breastfeeding will be developed and provided to all expectant parents.

Step 3: Create Goals and Objectives

Committee → Assessment → **Goals** → Planning → Implementation → Evaluation

Prioritizing these goals will depend on the main concerns of the employees and of the organization as a whole. In Step 4 of this Resource (“Plan activities to meet goals and objectives”), you will look more closely at the different components of your program using programming strategy tables, and prioritize activities you would like to implement in your organization.

Step 3: Create Goals and Objectives

Committee → Assessment → **Goals** → Planning → Implementation → Evaluation

Vermont Success Story

ENGLEBERTH CONSTRUCTION

Engleberth Construction (150–500 employees) has created the health goals of increasing flexibility (thereby decreasing risk of injury) and reducing the risk of chronic diseases. Employees are encouraged to meet flexibility standards and three out of four health criteria in order to receive a discount on health insurance. The company works with partner organizations Injury and Health Management Solutions and Fletcher Allen Health Care to achieve these goals.



Step 4: Plan Activities to Meet Goals and Objectives

Committee → Assessment → Goals → **Planning** → Implementation → Evaluation

With the assessment and goals/objectives phases complete, it's time to plan the program. When planning the activities, always remember to consider evaluation, which is paramount in determining if the wellness program is meeting the stated goals and objectives. What are the strategies that will work best in your organization? In the following section you will find some strategies which have been proven to work. Also, be sure to check out the Vermont businesses that presently have thriving wellness programs in place and have received recognition from the Vermont Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports: <http://www.vermontfitness.org/awards.html>.

In this Resource, the programming strategies (Appendix C, pp A-20-A-32) have three functions:

- To present an overview of the amount of resources needed to implement an activity
- To ascertain in which level (individual, environmental/organizational or policy) changes need to occur.
- To identify additional resources available.

The strategies are based on five focus areas:

- General Health Education for Disease Risk Factors (Appendix C, p. A-20)
- Physical Activity (Appendix C, p. A-23)
- Nutrition (Appendix C, p. A-26)
- Tobacco Cessation (Appendix C, p. A-30)
- Breastfeeding (Appendix C, p. A-32)

The programming strategies provide an outline of changes that can be made in your institution. Please be sure to review the resources available in each table along with the tools provided in the links below.

Step 4: Plan Activities to Meet Goals and Objectives

Committee → Assessment → Goals → **Planning** → Implementation → Evaluation

General Health Education for Disease Risk Factors

It is crucial to provide the background information and resources needed for a successful worksite wellness program. Also, a company culture in which wellness is encouraged will reinforce healthy behavior. Review the strategies in Appendix C, p. A-20 to ensure you are covering all the bases.

One excellent resource that helps with the initiation and continued implementation of wellness programs is the Health Risk Appraisal (HRA). HRAs may require increased company resources, but they are useful and of great benefit in planning activities for a worksite wellness program. Benefits include:

- Identifying risk factors.
- Providing individualized feedback.
- Linking a person with at least one intervention to promote health, sustain function, and/or prevent disease.

More information on HRAs can be found on the CDC Web Site:

http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/hwi/program_design/health_risk_appraisals.htm

Additionally, your local hospital likely has community outreach, that assists in planning for worksite wellness programs, especially in providing expertise and technical assistance for performing HRAs. For more information, contact your local hospital.

ScoreHealth™ is one HRA program being used in various settings that provides practical and cost-effective technology to improve the health of communities and workforces at substantially reduced cost. Employees are screened and offered immediate results and goals related to a variety of health risks, including heart disease, diabetes and cancer. For more information: <http://www.scorehealth.com/index.html>.

Step 4: Plan Activities to Meet Goals and Objectives

Committee → Assessment → Goals → **Planning** → Implementation → Evaluation

Physical Activity

People who are more physically active have a reduced risk of heart disease, diabetes and some types of cancer, in addition to lower stress levels. All of these benefits likely contribute to a happier and more productive employee and saves the company money through reduced use of costly health benefits and compensation plans as well as reduced employee absenteeism.

It is important to note that while physical activities are crucial to a successful wellness program, always consider liability and legal issues associated with their initiation. It is wise to require employees to consult with their physicians and/or sign a consent form prior to beginning any exercise program.

Resources for planning worksite physical activity activities:

- See Physical Activity Programming Strategies, Appendix C, p. A-20 for ideas and resources.
- As part of Fit and Healthy Vermonters, the Blueprint For Health's Community Component, and Vermont's Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports Get Moving Vermont is available statewide. Get Move Vermont is a program designed to encourage and support Vermonters with beginning and maintaining personal physical activity programs. Check with your local Department of Health district office for opportunities in your area: http://healthvermont.gov/local/district/district_office.aspx
- See: Tips for assessing community resources for physical activity opportunities which can be found at: <http://healthvermont.gov/family/fit/worksitewellness.aspx> under Additional Information.
- Provide maps/guides of local bike paths around the organization. Check out the maps available from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Vermont for walks around in different communities around the state: <https://www.bcbsvt.com/pages/community/walkingworks-supplies.php>.
- Map out your own walking route around your office or building to encourage activity during the workday.
- Consider having walking meetings when able instead of the sit-down variety.
- Support physical activity by offering breaks in the workday and flexible time to exercise.

Step 4: Plan Activities to Meet Goals and Objectives

Committee → Assessment → Goals → **Planning** → Implementation → Evaluation

- Post signs near the elevators and stairwell encouraging employees to “step up to health!”
 - Check out these supportive signs from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpha/hwi/Resources/stairwell/stairwell_messages.pdf
 - Use trivia questions in the stairwells to encourage people to keep climbing, for samples, see Stairwell Trivia.

Looking for more technical assistance?

The Vermont Department of Health is here to help!

Contact the district office in your area http://healthvermont.gov/local/district/district_office.aspx. Or call 802-863-7200 or toll-free in Vermont 800-464-4343.

Step 4: Plan Activities to Meet Goals and Objectives

Committee → Assessment → Goals → **Planning** → Implementation → Evaluation

Nutrition

Healthy eating improves overall wellness and, in addition to physical activity, decreases risk of obesity and chronic disease. As most employees are likely to eat and drink while at work, promoting and offering healthier choices, such as fruits and vegetables, will encourage employees to make healthier food choices. Meetings, conferences, vending machines, and cafeterias are all places more nutritious foods can be promoted. Additionally, by offering more opportunity for employees to store and prepare food at work, the less likely they are to eat out.

Resources for planning worksite nutrition activities:

- See Nutrition Programming Strategies, Appendix C, p. A-20 for ideas and resources.
- Vermont Health Department's Eat for Health Web Site provides extensive nutrition resources: <http://healthvermont.gov/eatforhealth/index.aspx>
- The Worksite Healthy Eating Guidelines provides:
 - Menu ideas and offering seasonal and local foods for meetings and conferences
 - Making healthier food choices
 - Vending machine guidelines
 - What to look for on a food label
 - How to visualize serving sizes
- Invite a registered dietitian to your company to present nutrition topics to staff or to conduct one-on-one nutritional assessment and counseling www.eatrightvt.org.

