

## Physical Activity Policies for the Workplace

Adequate physical activity reduces risk for several diseases and conditions, including cardiovascular disease, stroke, high blood pressure, obesity, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, some cancers, anxiety, and depression.

Unfortunately, many adult Minnesotans do not get enough physical activity per week to meet CDC recommendations. As an employer, you have a unique opportunity to support increased physical activity levels among your employees by creating a workplace that makes it easy to build activity into the day, including places, indoor and outdoor, to be active.

When employers provide support, programs or incentives for employees to be active, employees are more likely to use their breaks during the workday for physical activity. Preliminary research suggests that employer support may influence workers' activity during time away from work as well. This is good news for employers.

According to several studies, physically active employees are, on average, both more productive and less costly (in terms of health care expenses) than inactive employees.

The best practice for employers who want to increase physical activity among employees includes the following components:

- Availability and identification of places for physical activity
- Policies that support physical activity
- Programs that promote more physical activity
- Promotion of opportunities for physical activity

### Sample Policy:

Lake Region Healthcare Origination Date: 02/02/16

Fergus Falls, MN

## **WORKDAY FLEXIBILITY: PROMOTION OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

### **PURPOSE**

To provide a work environment that promotes and is supportive of physical activity.

### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

Lake Region Healthcare recognizes the benefits of regular exercise for its employees and the organization as a whole. Physical activity is essential for good health and contributes to individual positive well-being. The workplace is an important setting in which employees can increase their levels of physical activity to benefit their health and protect against illness. This is particularly important for employees holding sedentary positions. As a way to encourage

overall health and physical fitness, Lake Region Healthcare will permit, to the extent possible, its employees with workday flexibility to encourage physical exercise.

Activities and events sponsored or supported by LRH can include opportunities for physical activity by:

- Building physical activity breaks into meetings, conferences, and events such as stretch-breaks, icebreakers or other activities.
- Identifying physical activity opportunities such as: maps with walking routes and local attractions, recreational and exercise facilities, organizing walking groups, and other group activities.
- Supporting schedules to allow physical activity including workday flexibility when possible.
- Providing encouragement from group leadership to engage in physical activity such as: promoting healthy lifestyles, physical activity for employees, and serving as role models for staff.

## **GUIDELINES FOR WORKDAY FLEXIBILITY**

Working with their department director, employees may be permitted to adjust their workday in order to engage in health promotion activities such as physical activity during the day and yet maintain their expected number of work hours.

Department staffing and work demands are very different among departments. The extent of workday flexibility for exercise may not be appropriate for all departments and employees. Therefore, the employee and department director must mutually agree to the individualized flexible workday plan.

Factors that need to be considered when evaluating the feasibility of a flexible workday plan include appropriate office/department coverage, minimum staffing levels, vacations, sick leave, other unplanned absences, and peak workloads. Department Directors are encouraged to support flexible work schedules to the extent possible; however, providing flexibility in the work day should not disrupt the normal workflow of the department.

Failure of the employee to adhere to these guidelines may cause the employee to lose the opportunity to participate in a workday flexibility plan.

(Information adapted from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota Healthy Worksites materials)

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