

Steps to a Healthier Workforce

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) has introduced Steps to A Healthier US Workforce. Blending workplace and personal risk factors, the program recommends that companies set up programs aimed at ensuring employees' safety and health.

The estimated direct costs for occupational injuries and illnesses reached \$40.1 billion in 1999, with over \$200 billion in indirect costs (Source: Liberty Mutual Workplace Safety Index, 2002), so the need for this sort of program is crucial for companies who are wanting to reduce costs. A Healthy Workforce program can save your company money in ways including lowered health and work comp premiums because of less health and work comp claims, less time off from work due to illness or injury, and increased morale and productivity. Below are some actions your company can take to help prevent work-related injury or illness and promote a healthy lifestyle among your employees.

Promote Personal Health and Prevent Disease:

- Support healthy diets, bringing in healthy snacks for employees
- Offer weight management programs, such as discounted or free gym or Weight Watchers memberships
- Offer smoking cessation programs
- Prevent disease with early detection screenings for employees, such as cancer, high cholesterol, and hypertension
- Help employees deal with effects of existing diseases, such as depression or diabetes management

Promote Workplace Health and Safety:

- Office, desk, and chair design should be ergonomic to prevent strain
- Be clear on you organizational values
- Implement stress reduction and work-life balance programs
- Be sure that employees engage in safe practices, such as wearing personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Offer light duty and job accommodation after an employee returns to work from an injury.

It is important that a team leads this program with members from all of your company's departments and at least one member of senior management. Team members should promote the programs to the employees and keep it active in their minds. While a health program can cut a company's costs, remember also that the real focus is on improving the quality of life for both your employees and your company.

For more information, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh.steps>



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