

## Health and Productivity: Comprehensive Approaches to Worksite Wellness in the Public Sector

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*Abstract:* Our society faces an epidemic in chronic disease that is caused largely by unhealthy lifestyle practices. Such practices are factors in the six leading causes of death – heart disease, cancer, stroke, respiratory diseases, accidents and diabetes. Together they account for 70 percent of all deaths in the US. The economic costs are a tremendous burden to employers

Healthy lifestyles that include getting physical activity, practicing good nutrition, increased preventive care, and decreased tobacco use can lower costs to the employer. In the worksite setting, healthier lifestyles also deliver innovation, the ability to focus, increased morale, decreased absenteeism and turnover, and ultimately a more productive workforce. Productivity gains and accountability make creating a culture of health a necessary business strategy for ESD leadership.

Creating a culture of health that supports the employee's health and well-being necessarily involves the employer. The employer has a direct role in making it easier for employees to practice healthy lifestyles of their choosing. It is about removing barriers and creating wellness opportunities. It is not about telling employees how to live, but rather creating a physical and social environment that support people in their journey for health and happiness.

This update is designed to describe the importance of the Healthy Worksite Initiative, a pilot project now finishing up its initial phase, and how it has played out in one state agency, Employment Security Department, a summary of the compelling results, the interventions in progress, and recommendations.