

Survey shows half of all American workplaces offer health and wellness programs

April 22 2019

Workplace health promotion programs are increasing in the U.S., according to researchers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Gillings School of Global Public Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and RTI International. Nearly half of all workplaces in the nation offer some level of health promotion or wellness programs and 17% of workplaces with 50 or more employees offer comprehensive workplace health promotion programs.

Laura Linnan, professor in the Department of Health Behavior at UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health and founding director of the Carolina Collaborative for Research on Work and Health, is lead author of the study which published on April 22 in the *American Journal of Health Promotion*.

The 2017 Workplace Health in America Survey is the most recent national survey of workplace health promotion programs, and the first of its kind in 13 years. The survey assessed the current status of employer-based health promotion programs, addressing nutrition, stress, [physical activity](#), alcohol and substance abuse, sleep and a variety of other health topics.

Many workplace health promotion programs addressed only certain components of health and wellness. In contrast, comprehensive workplace health promotion programs include supportive social and

physical environments, linkages to related programs, health education programs, integration of programs into the organization's structure, and health screenings with appropriate follow-up and education. The team found that three factors were independent predictors of having a comprehensive health promotion program: at least one person who was assigned responsibility for the program, a budget and several years of experience with health promotion programming.

Other key findings from the study included:

- The percentage of worksites with a workplace health promotion program increased with the size of the employer, ranging from 39% of worksites with 10-24 employees, to 60% of worksites with 50-99 employees, to 92% of worksites with 500 or more employees
- Almost 30% of worksites offered some type of program to address physical activity, fitness, or sedentary behavior
- About 19% of worksites offered a program to help employees stop using tobacco products
- About 17% of worksites offered a program to address obesity or weight management

"Most American adults work, and many spend half or more of their waking hours at work," Linnan said. "Where we work, how long we work, the conditions of our work, who we work with—all of these factors impact our health. Employers have an opportunity to shape work environments and work conditions in ways that support employee health. The Workplace Health in America Survey identifies gaps in knowledge to help practitioners and researchers set the agenda for future progress in worker and [workplace](#) health."

The study's results suggest that small employers will need focused attention, as they tend to offer fewer health programs, policies and

benefits than larger employers. Given that small employers tend to have resources for safety, one strategy that the research team identified is to look for ways to integrate safety and health [promotion](#) programs in ways that create a culture of [health](#) for all employees.

Provided by University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Citation: Survey shows half of all American workplaces offer health and wellness programs (2019, April 22) retrieved 6 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-04-survey-american-workplaces-health-wellness.html>

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