

Be a City with a Healthy Workforce

For every dollar invested by employers in workplace wellness programs, there was an average savings of more than \$3.00. In business terms, that's a 3:1 return on investment.¹

Healthcare costs are an increasing burden on city budgets. Yet those costs could be reduced if fewer employees suffered from the chronic diseases related to obesity and overweight.



*City policies can help city workers feel better and stay healthy.
Photo by Reed Hutchinson.*

Preventable chronic diseases account for more than 75% of all healthcare expenditures.² Health care and lost productivity from overweight, obesity, and physical inactivity cost California more than \$41 billion in 2006.³

To stem their costs from healthcare utilization, injury and lost productivity and to increase staff morale, many cities are implementing employee wellness policies and no-cost and low-cost health incentives.

This fact sheet offers ideas for policies that cities can adopt to create healthier food and physical activity environments for their employees. The HEAL Cities Campaign website (www.HealCitiesCampaign.org) offers resources for each of the following Healthy Eating Active Living city policies:

1. Pass an employee wellness resolution
2. Create policies to include health breaks during the work day
3. Institute healthy snack choices
4. Improve breastfeeding accommodations for employees



The Healthy Eating Active Living Cities Campaign provides training and technical assistance to help city officials adopt policies that improve their communities' physical activity and retail food environments. Supporting healthy choices is essential to address the obesity epidemic among California's children and adults, currently costing the state more than \$41 billion annually in healthcare and lost productivity.

The Campaign, funded by Kaiser Permanente and the Vitamin Cases Consumer Settlement Fund, is a partnership of the League of California Cities, the California Center for Public Health Advocacy, and the Cities Counties and Schools Partnership.

This fact sheet is one in a series providing background and policy ideas for healthy cities.

www.HealCitiesCampaign.org

1 Pass an Employee Wellness Resolution

Address employee wellness with a city council resolution, a mayor's executive order or a city manager's administrative policy. For example, the Mayor of **San Francisco** issued an executive order mandating a timeline for all city departments to incorporate strategies for enhancing employee wellness into departmental mission and values statements and for implementing workplace wellness policies and programs.

2 Create Policies to Include Health Breaks During the Work Day

One step toward improving employee health is creating policies that build health breaks or healthy behaviors into the work day.

■ 10-Minute Physical Activity Opportunities

Employees can reap meaningful health benefits from even a single 10-minute physical activity break each day. Benefits include improvements in blood pressure, waist circumference, mood states, cumulative trauma disorders, attention span and other clinical measures.⁴ Cities can establish a policy to adopt UCLA's Lift Off! program to introduce short exercise breaks throughout the work week at a set time each day and at meetings lasting more than one hour. **Orange County's Public Health Department** adopted the Lift Off! program, giving employees 10 minutes of paid time to participate if they choose. Employees who choose not participate do not receive the extra paid break.



Cities can partner with local organizations to run exercise classes. Photo courtesy of Thousand Oaks Wellnes Program.

ESTABLISH A WORKSITE WELLNESS COMMITTEE

The role of the Worksite Wellness Committee is to assess the nutrition and physical activity environment within the workplace, survey employees about their needs and interests, implement programs and recommend policy changes.

In the **City of Stockton**, the Parks and Recreation and Human Resources departments have initiated an employee wellness program by establishing a committee with representatives from all city departments. The **City of Seaside** maintains a six-member wellness committee that includes management and non-management employees.

■ Active Stairwell Policies

Walking one flight up or two flights down is an effective and inexpensive way to add physical activity into the daily routine. Cities can set standards for stairwell safety—including unlocked doors into stairwells and adequate lighting—and encourage employees to use stairwells whenever possible. The **City of Chino's** award-winning stairwell program includes a local art exhibit in city stairwells to heighten their aesthetics and a competition regarding stair use with low-cost and donated prizes.

■ Stretch Warm-Ups

The **San Francisco Public Works Department** maintains an award-winning program of stretching for general services employees at their work sites each morning. The decentralized, employee-led program has resulted in a significant reduction in the rates of employee injury and illness, reductions in lost work days, and an increase in productivity.⁵

■ Stress Management and Wellness Workshops

To provide workshops in stress reduction and other health-related topics to employees, cities can partner with local health organizations that have ready-made programs. The American Cancer Society and American Heart Association offer free and low-cost employee wellness programs. The **City of Thousand Oaks** partners with local health care providers to offer free lunchtime classes and campaigns on specific health topics. The **City of Paradise** offers the CHIP (Coronary Health Improvement Project) to its employees.

3 Institute Healthy Snack Choices

Many workers consume a significant portion of their daily food while on the job. Foods consumed from vending machines, through concessions, in meetings and at other public food-service establishments are often higher in calories, fat, sugar and salt than are foods prepared at home. Making healthy food available at work is one way to address obesity and overweight by enabling employees to eat a healthy diet. Offering healthy choices in public areas can also benefit residents who use city facilities and programs.

- **Healthier Vending Machines**

A vending machine policy can require that a certain percentage of items—typically 50% to 100%—meet standards set forth by state legislation governing school vending. The City of San Jose’s vending policy for libraries requires 100% of items to meet State standards for school vending. Machines located in other city-owned facilities are required to have at least 50% of their items meet the State standards.

- **Healthier Food at City-Sponsored Meetings, Events and Programs**

Policies that require healthier foods at city-sponsored meetings and events is another way cities can support employee and resident health.

The City of San Leandro’s Recreation and Human Services Department established a wellness policy that sets nutritional guidelines for meals and snacks at its youth and senior programs. Recommended snacks include fresh fruits and vegetables;



Cities that include fruit and vegetable options at meetings and events help employees stay healthy. Photo by Judy Rabbani, CCPHA.



Healthy food choices on the job help workers stay more alert and focused. Photo courtesy of Thousand Oaks Wellnes Program.

nuts and dried fruits; multi-grain breads, tortillas and crackers; and low-fat and no-sugar spreads. Brentwood’s City Council adopted a wellness policy whose nutritional guidelines ensure that staff and residents have healthy choices among items sold at public facilities.

HEALTHY MEETING POLICY

Meetings are a major part of the workday for city employees in administrative, program and management positions. Oftentimes, meetings include food and beverages along with long periods of sitting. A healthy meeting policy that provides guidelines for food and beverages and prescribes activity breaks for longer meetings can help employees stay alert, focused and healthy. The University of California has an excellent online guide to healthy meetings and events:

www.uhs.berkeley.edu/facstaff/healthmatters/healthymeetings.shtml



Providing lactation rooms helps mothers maintain breastfeeding when they return to work.

4 Improve Breastfeeding Accommodations for Employees

Breastfeeding is the first line of prevention for childhood obesity and provides a host of additional health benefits for mother and child.⁶

Because breastfed babies have less illness, support for breastfeeding mothers results in reduced employee absenteeism to care for ill children, along with improved employee productivity and higher morale.⁷ While state law mandates a baseline of accommodation measures for breastfeeding in government worksites, local breastfeeding policies can enhance accommodations so that mothers are more supported to pump their milk at work.

The City of Walnut Creek allows breastfeeding mothers a flexible schedule to pump their milk during the day. The Cities of Baldwin Park and Chula Vista adopted policies that include educating managers about lactation accommodation and informing employees about the city's lactation accommodation policies before and after maternity leave.

Join the Healthy Eating Active Living Cities Campaign

Go to www.HealCitiesCampaign.org and let us know what you are doing, or contact the campaign:

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Resources

California Fit Business Toolkit, www.takeactionca.com/california-fit-business-kit-tools.asp.

Online toolkit with guidelines for starting a wellness committee, conducting an assessment of workplace physical activity and nutrition environments, and implementing policies and programs.

American Cancer Society Workplace Solutions, Building a Healthy Workplace, www.cancer.org/downloads/COM/Employer_Wellness_Final.pdf.

A brochure for businesses about partnering with the ACS to improve the workplace environment and help workers practice healthy behaviors.

The American Heart Association—Start! Program
mystartonline.org/home.jsp.

This program focuses on walking and nutrition for fitness and heart health.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—LEANWorks, www.cdc.gov/leanworks/

A free, web-based program that helps employers calculate how much obesity costs their company and how much the company could save by implementing an obesity prevention program in the workplace. It also provides guidelines for adopting effective policies and creating programs.

UCLA School of Public Health. Lift Off!

Two useful documents about these 10-minute, structured group-based exercise breaks:

- *Lift Off! 10-Minute physical activity breaks*
www.ph.ucla.edu/cehd/Documents/ALR_Lift_OffsAre.pdf
- *Lift Offs work!: The rapidly growing evidence base*
www.ph.ucla.edu/cehd/Documents/ALR_Lift_Off_Evidence.pdf.

The Bay Area Physical Activity and Nutrition Collaborative
www.banpac.org/healthy_vending_machine_toolkit.htm.

BANPAC's online toolkit guides cities and counties to establish a vending machine policy. Includes examples from the cities of San Jose and Berkeley.

U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration Breastfeeding Toolkit,

ask.hrsa.gov/detail.cfm?PubID=MCH00250

A free publication makes the business case for breastfeeding and includes hands-on materials to enable management to implement breastfeeding accommodation policies.

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