

## Staff Wellness and Learning

When school staff plans for health and wellness in schools, they often design a program that strictly focuses on the health of students. They have great ideas for supporting the nutritional, emotional and physical health of students, but often forget about one important piece; taking care of themselves.

It is estimated that 6.7 million people in the United States are employed by schools. This includes teachers, administrators, support staff and health professionals. These are the individuals responsible for feeding kids, seeing they get safely to and from school, providing for student's mental health and well-being and providing fun, engaging learning opportunities. They most certainly may be the student's greatest role models.

School staff supports the greatest asset schools have, their students. An unhealthy school staff can lead to less success in the classroom, increased absenteeism, decreased productivity, and increased health care costs for the school. Increased staff turnover and poor morale may also exist.

### Did you know?

- In a study published in the 2000 International Journal of Stress Management, **67 percent** of teachers surveyed described their jobs as "extremely stressful." Between **5% and 20%** of all U.S. teachers burn out because of it.
- The 2002 March issue of Diabetes care (American Diabetes Association) stated that the annual cost of Diabetes in medical expenditures and lost productivity jumped from **\$98 billion** in 1997 to **\$132 billion** in 2002.
- According to the American Heart Association estimates for the year 2006, **81,100,000** people in the United States have one or more forms of cardiovascular (heart) disease. Worksite wellness programs can help combat this disease by; increasing worker productivity, reducing absenteeism, lowering turnover rates and reducing healthcare costs.



## Why Schools?

School staff spends the majority of their day in school. In a typical school setting, they are crunched for time, have pressure to ensure student achievement, may not even take a lunch break and have too much on their plate. Finding time to focus on health is just one more thing to do.

Schools have a unique opportunity to support school staff where they spend the most time. By offering services during the day or on the school grounds, school administrators can help staff find time for maintaining or improving their health and for fitting fitness in.

They can provide health education classes or professional development courses, offer healthy lunches to staff, provide fitness breaks or offer a quiet space to decompress.

Many health insurance companies offer a wellness program that coincides with school staff health activities such as lifelong behavioral change initiatives, employee assistance programs, emergency care and balancing work and family life.

## For further information

School Employee Wellness - <http://www.schoolempwell.org/>

Wellness Council of America <http://www.welcoa.org/>

LiveWell Colorado - Worksites and Businesses <http://www.livewellcolorado.org/partners-in-action/worksites-businesses>

## Comprehensive Staff Wellness Program

Your school can offer a wide variety of services designed to meet the multiple and changing needs of children and their families. A comprehensive, interconnected school-wide program will make staff wellness an integral part of your school's culture. A fully integrated program contains each of the following categories.



### Staff Health and Wellness Plan

The school provides an organized staff health and wellness program that enriches their physical, mental, emotional and occupational well-being. The school provides comprehensive health care insurance to all staff. The plan includes ways to encourage staff to engage in physical activity during the workday. The school has a method for promoting and encouraging staff participation in its health programs. The school offers professional development units for staff to participate in health activities.

### Staff Educational Health Program

The school offers personal health assessments for staff. The school offers staff member's physical health screenings that are accessible and free or low-cost at least once a year. The school offers health education programs for staff on various health topics including disease prevention and healthy eating habits. The school's staff health education program includes motivating change in individual behavior by increasing knowledge and influencing attitudes and beliefs.

### Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

The school EAP program offers chronic health conditions management services for staff. The school EAP program offers mental or emotional management services for staff. The school EAP program offers job stress coping skills services for staff. The school EAP program offers financial management services for staff.

### Staff Nutrition Program

The school offers staff healthy eating or nutrition classes that are accessible and free or low-cost. The school offers weight management classes or competitions (e.g., the Biggest Loser). The school offers nutritious food options (e.g., salads) in the school's cafeteria for the staff to purchase.

### Staff Physical Fitness Program

The school offers staff members' physical activity/fitness programs that are accessible and free or low-cost. The school provides walking or fitness breaks for staff, before or after school or during the day. The school offers discount recreation center passes, nearby gym memberships or local YMCA passes to staff.

### Staff Tobacco Cessation Program

The school offers staff members a tobacco-use cessation program that is accessible and free or low-cost. The school offers staff self-help education materials for quitting smoking or chewing. The school has a referral for a telephone quit line for staff.

### Staff Stress Management Program

The school offers stress management programs for staff members that are accessible and free or low-cost. The school provides activities or materials on stress management (e.g., relaxation, ergonomics).

## Jump start your staff wellness program

Start small and grow from there with some simple activities like helping bring in a chef for a healthy lunch n learn cooking demonstration, offer quit smoking materials, and provide stress relief or yoga stretch breaks during the day.

## Long term success

Each of these categories can involve a multitude of strategies to help ensure long term success. To identify the ones that most appropriately meet the needs of your school, please contact Cathy Schmelter at Get Smart Schools – [cathy@getsmartschools.org](mailto:cathy@getsmartschools.org).