

## Facts on School Employee Wellness

### Did You Know...?

- Approximately two-thirds of all deaths in adults aged 25 years and older in the United States can be attributed to cardiovascular disease, cancer, and diabetes. The primary causes of these conditions are four preventable risk factors – tobacco use, poor eating habits, inadequate physical activity, and overweight.
- Health insurance expenses are the fastest growing cost component for employers. Since 2000, employment-based health insurance premiums have increased 87%, and premiums for employer sponsored health insurance have been rising four times faster on average than workers' earnings.<sup>1</sup>
- The United States spent approximately \$2.0 trillion on health care, or \$6,697 per person in 2005, which is more than a 30% increase from 2001. By 2015, health care spending in the United States is projected to reach \$4.0 trillion.<sup>1</sup>

### Why are school employee wellness programs important?

More than 6.7 million people are employed by public school systems in the United States – about 3.5 million teachers and 3.2 million other employees. This large workforce is charged with one of the nation's most critical functions - preparing our youth to become successful and productive citizens. When school districts ignore the health of their employees, a valuable asset of the nation's school is put at risk. Further, the conditions that affect the health of employees also influence the health and learning of students. Protecting the physical and mental health of school employees is integral to protecting the health of students and ensuring their academic success.<sup>1</sup>

### Potential benefits of school employee wellness programs include:

- Decreased employee absenteeism
- Lower health care and insurance costs
- Increased employee retention
- Improved employee morale
- Fewer work-related injuries
- Fewer worker compensation and disability claims
- Attractiveness to prospective employees
- Positive community image
- Increased productivity
- Increased motivation to teach about health
- Increased motivation to practice healthy behaviors
- Healthy role models for students



Alliance  
for a  
**Healthier  
Generation**



## Facts on School Employee Wellness, Cont.

### What can schools do to improve school employee wellness?

- Identify a wellness leader or committee
- Obtain support from your administration for developing a school employee wellness program
- Complete a school employee wellness needs assessment with staff
- Identify potential resources
- Create an action plan using your needs assessment results that includes opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity
- Implement the plan
- Evaluate annually and adapt the plan when necessary
- Sustain the program and encourage your district to adopt a wellness policy for all employees
- Negotiate with your human resources representatives to ensure that obesity prevention and treatment is covered in district health insurance policies.

### What is the Healthy Schools Program?

- The Healthy Schools Program is an initiative of the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, a partnership between the American Heart Association and the William J. Clinton Foundation.
- The Healthy Schools Program focuses on helping schools:
  - improve the food and beverages during the regular and extended school day
  - increase physical activity
  - improve the quality of health and physical education programs
  - establish wellness programs for school employees
- Participation in the Healthy Schools Program is an excellent way to jump start the implementation of the district wellness policy at your school and to be recognized for your efforts. By joining the program, your school will gain access to best practice tools and resources through telephonic and online support. Examples of support include: online trainings with a cadre of experts, Implementers' Toolkits on a variety of topics, and tangible resources to help with implementation.
- The Healthy Schools Program team can help your school every step of the way!

**For more information on School Employee Wellness please contact Ellen Essick at [ellen.essick@healthiergeneration.org](mailto:ellen.essick@healthiergeneration.org)**

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<sup>1</sup> Directors of Health Promotion and Education. (2005) *School Employee Wellness: A Guide for Protecting the Assets of our Nations Schools*. Washington, D.C.: Author.