

Occupational Health Group is a service offered to the business community of North Alabama by Huntsville Hospital and Decatur General Hospital Systems

## Wellness Services

by Heather Whorton, RN, Wellness Coordinator, Occupational Health Group

Research studies related to Wellness indicate that Americans who take care of themselves and make healthy lifestyle choices are healthier, happier, more productive, miss work less and have lower healthcare costs. An article from the Journal of the American Medical Association (AMA) noted that in one research study the “wellness” approach to healthcare produced a 17% decline in total medical/doctor visits and a 35% reduction in medical/doctor visits for minor illness. With that said, having an Employee Wellness Program in place can boost morale, improve health and fitness as well as increase productivity in the workplace.

Workplace Wellness Programs come in all shapes and sizes. Every company is different and has unique needs. In order for these programs to function properly and produce results, they must have a clear operating plan with an attainable and measurable goal. Regardless of plan design, there are 5 common components that set successful programs apart from the rest: Visible CEO/Senior Leadership Support, Needs Assessment/Data Collection, Choosing Appropriate Health Promotion Intervention and Implementation, Communication and Evaluating Outcomes.

### Visible CEO/Senior Leadership Support

It is imperative that management is seen as an active participant to lead the Workplace Wellness Program. The key to ensuring worker buy-in is setting a positive example.

### Needs Assessment/Data Collection

If a company is interested in creating a Wellness Program that has the capability to contain costs and improve employee health, data collection is essential. The most important items are:

- Organizational Data - modified health care claims and demographics.
- Employee Health Data - Health Risk Assessments (HRA's), Biometric data (BP, cholesterol, glucose, height, weight, BMI, body fat, etc).
- Interest Indicators - What health programs are your employees interested in?
- Employee Productivity data - includes things such as absenteeism, presenteeism, disability and worker's compensation data.

### Choosing Appropriate Health Promotion Intervention and Implementation

By offering the programs that are consistent with what the organization needs (Needs Assessment/Data Collection) and what your employees are interested in (Interest Indicator), the health promotion interventions will be much more effective.

Issues to consider when choosing Appropriate Health Interventions:

- What programs will be offered?
  - Educational Classes/Lunch and Learns
  - Challenges
  - Blood Pressure Screenings
  - Individual Health Coaching
- How often will they be offered?
  - Annually
  - Quarterly
  - Monthly
- What incentives will be used to increase participation?
  - Merchandise (t-shirts, pedometers, water bottles, resistance bands, etc)
  - Gift Cards/Cash
  - Employee Recognition (newsletter, reserved parking spot, mass email, etc)
  - “Well Days” off
  - Drawings

### Communication

Maintaining strong Workplace Wellness Program communication is very important. You can offer a great Wellness Program, but if people are unaware of it, they will not participate. The programs that achieve the greatest success are those which are communicated aggressively from the get go.

### Evaluating Outcomes

8 variables which make excellent evaluation targets:

- Participation
- Participation Satisfaction
- Improvements in knowledge, attitudes and behavior
- Change in biometric measurements
- Risk Factors
- Physical Environment and Corporate Culture
- Productivity
- Return on Investment (ROI)

Wellness Programs that offer a variety of health promotion formats or interventions have higher participation rates and are more successful in achieving health improvement. These programs have the potential to significantly reduce employee health care costs while improving the employee's quality of life.

We at Wellness Services make a difference by providing a variety of programs to meet your company's diverse needs. Please call 256-922-6699 for your free corporate assessment or access our website, which lists our many educational classes and services, at [www.OHGonline.org](http://www.OHGonline.org).





## Surviving Holiday Stress

The holiday season is quickly approaching. You may be excited and enthusiastic, or you may be anxious and exhausted. The holidays can be a wonderful time of year but often extremely stressful. Dateline NBC and Prevention Magazine conducted a poll in 1996 to see how people view the holidays. 41% of those polled stated that Christmas and Hanukkah were stressful, as stressful as asking the boss for a raise. Money was viewed as the #1 cause of stress, with 34% saying they worried about money during the holidays. And women were more likely than men to feel “stressed out” during the holidays.

Where does holiday stress come from? Generally speaking, the 2 biggest sources of holiday stress come from our unrealistic expectations and from over-scheduling. The perfect holiday is an illusion. And the quest for perfection is guaranteed to end in frustration and disappointment, because nothing will measure up. One problem is trying to please everyone or do everything for everybody. The fact is you can't please everyone, you can't do it all, and you can't be all things to all people. So take that burden off your shoulders. We want to make sure that everyone has the happiest holiday ever, but ultimately they are responsible for enjoying themselves. Focus on the real meaning of the holidays: gathering with family, connecting with friends and participating in tradition.

Also, don't put too much pressure on yourself to be perfect. The house doesn't have to be spotless. Not every meal has to be prepared from scratch. It's really okay to go out and buy the dessert instead of cooking your own cake or pie. And, this is not the time to try out new gourmet recipes for a holiday party. Remember this phrase: “Dare to be average”. Give yourself permission to be less than perfect. You will enjoy your holidays much more if you do.

Another holiday stressor comes from over-scheduling or over-committing ourselves. During the holidays we often try to do too much. If your list of holiday activities every year is too long, you have to recognize that you can't do everything, do it well and enjoy doing it. You have to make choices. For example, baking cookies can be fun, but baking 20 varieties at the last minute can be exhausting. Keep things simple for yourself. Also, you can lower your stress level by remembering a simple 2-letter word: NO. If you are saying “yes” to some people, who are you saying “no” to? Some things in life we are obligated to do. In other cases, though, we can say no. During the holidays don't lose sight of what is really important to you: spending time with loved ones. When saying no to a request, keep it short and simple: “I'm going to have to say no. I promised my family we'd spend more time together this month”. You may feel a little awkward at first. But remember this too is your holiday to enjoy.

## Flu News

Influenza is one of the leading causes of absenteeism from work. Unlike the common cold, the flu can leave a person unable to function for several days - a problem that plagues many companies across North Alabama. On average, unscheduled absences cost U.S. employers \$602 for every employee annually, and according to trends, these expenses are only expected to increase in the coming years.

The cost per employee for on-site vaccination is:

Over 500 participants	\$21.00
301- 500 participants	\$22.00
101-300 participants	\$23.00
51 -100 participants	\$24.00
25 - 50 participants	\$25.00

Looking for a solution? Through OHG's On-Site Wellness Services Department, businesses have a unique opportunity to sponsor a flu clinic tailored specifically to the needs of their employees and organization. OHG's On-Site Flu Vaccination Program can reduce absenteeism, increase productivity, improve workplace morale, and cut medical costs, for the employer and employee. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is reporting that U.S. businesses could save \$12 billion annually through proactive flu shot campaigns and other wellness services.

If you expect less than 25 participants, you may send your employees to any of our OHG Clinics. The cost at the clinic is \$25.00 per person. We will administer vaccinations on-site and at our clinics starting October 10th and continuing through November and December. To find out how to develop a program that's customized to meet your specific needs, contact OHG Wellness Services at 256-922-6699.

## OHG Directory

Administration.....(256) 922-6675

Marketing and Business Development.....(256) 922-6677

Billing Department.....(256) 922-6673

OHG - Huntsville.....(256) 265-7000

OHG - Madison.....(256) 774-7300

OHG - Decatur.....(256) 353-4325

Wellness Services.....(256) 922-6699

[www.OHGonline.org](http://www.OHGonline.org)

## Holiday Closings

**All OHG clinics will be closed in observance of the following holidays:**

<b>Thanksgiving</b>	<b>November 24th &amp; 25th</b>
<b>Christmas</b>	<b>December 23rd &amp; 26th</b>
<b>New Year's</b>	<b>December 30th &amp; January 2nd</b>



Should you wish to set up a donation or schedule the LifeSouth blood drive mobile, please contact Karen Bolton at 1-888-795-2707 Ext: 55022 or email her at [klborden@lifesouth.org](mailto:klborden@lifesouth.org).



**DECATUR**  
 1615 Kathy Lane SW  
 Decatur, AL 35603  
 Phone: (256) 353-4325  
 Fax: (256) 353-9639

**HUNTSVILLE**  
 1963 Memorial Parkway  
 Suite 24  
 Huntsville, AL 35801  
 Phone: (256) 265-7000  
 Fax: (256) 265-7007

**MADISON**  
 9238 Madison Boulevard  
 Building 1, Ste. 200  
 Madison, AL 35758  
 Phone: (256) 774-7300  
 Fax: (256) 922-2532

**WELLNESS**  
 6767 Old Madison Pike  
 Building 4, Ste. 400  
 Huntsville, AL 35806  
 Phone: (256) 922-6699  
 Fax: (256) 922-6660