

ASTHO health program participation rises due to health and wellness credits

Company Name: Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO)

Location: Arlington, Virginia

Industry: Public Health

Founded: 1942

Number of Employees: 85

Age of Workplace Health Program: 6 years

Company Profile

ASTHO is a national nonprofit organization representing public health agencies in the United States, the U.S. Territories, and the District of Columbia as well as over 100,000 public health professionals employed by these agencies. ASTHO members, the chief health officials of these jurisdictions, formulate and influence sound public health policy and ensure excellence in state-based public health practice. ASTHO's primary function is to track, evaluate, and advise members on the impact and formation of public or private health policy which may affect them and to provide them with guidance and technical assistance on improving the nation's health.

Employee Health Program Origin

The workplace health program started in 2008 by forming a wellness committee that initially was driven by staff interest, not upper level management. It became more sophisticated in 2010 after ASTHO hired a consultant to help the group's leaders clarify organizational values. The top value identified was the health and wellness of employees. The organization began to develop a health program with the help of consultants and a workplace health accreditation agency. "Health and wellness is at the top of ASTHO's value pyramid," says Diane Koontz, the organization's senior director of human resources.

In general, ASTHO has a fairly young and healthy workforce and many staff members were health conscious and physically active prior to the development of the workplace health program. There also is a strong organizational culture of healthy living at ASTHO promoted by the executive director.

ASTHO Workplace Health Program Features

Some of the main features of the ASTHO program are:

- « An established wellness committee
- « Annual health screening for employees
- « A \$35 per month health and wellness credit to employees to use for a pre-determined list of health promotion items, such as athletic shoes, gym membership, bike locks, etc.
- « A discount rate for employees at a nearby gym which also offers some free classes such as yoga



Graphics provided by ASTHO
Workplace wellness.

- « An ASTHO wellness-month challenge, with the winning team receiving an award
- « A “maintain, don’t gain” challenge to employees providing tips and encouragement for staff to maintain their weight and stay healthy during the holiday season
- « Weekly, voluntary employee health walks
- « Encouragement to executive staff to make sure their employees are taking vacations and personal time to have a healthy work-life balance
- « Encouragement to employees who are dealing with health or family crises to take time to heal and deal with their situations, even if that means conducting minimal work activities or contact with staff over an extended amount of time
- « Bike racks in the parking garage
- « Availability of “standing work stations” for several staff offices
- « Permission for staff to do physical workouts during the work day as long as it doesn’t interfere with work obligations
- « A healthy food policy requiring all contractors to provide healthy foods at conference-center meetings

Program Costs

ASTHO estimates it spends about \$3,500 annually on their workplace health program, which includes costs related to annual health screenings and a \$35 monthly health credit per employee..

Program Outcomes

ASTHO has not tightly tracked outcomes of its program due, among other things, to the amount of staff turnover in the past few years. Anecdotally, however, ASTHO notes that due to annual health screenings, a few employees realized they were at risk for adverse health conditions that may not have been caught as early without the employer-sponsored screenings. ASTHO also notes it has had greater participation in its health program since instituting the \$35 a month health and wellness credit.

Challenges

There are many other features ASTHO would like to add to its program, but financial limitations have prevented the organization from doing so.

ASTHO

“Overall, our worksite wellness program has resulted in improved health, increased productivity and a heightened level of camaraderie among staff,” says ASTHO’s senior director of human resources, Diane Coontz.

CDC supports a coordinated, systematic and comprehensive approach to workplace health promotion. This profile is intended as an example of one employer’s approach and is not intended as an endorsement. For more information on developing workplace health programs, please visit <http://www.cdc.gov/workplacehealthpromotion>.



**Based on interview with ASTHO in October 2012 as part of the development of the CDC Work@Health® employer training program. This employer is not a participant in the Work@Health® program.*