News from the Wyoming Department of Health

Friday, December 8, 2006

Statewide Study Reviews Worksite Wellness in Wyoming

Officials from the Wyoming Department of Health are encouraging further establishment and expansion of worksite wellness programs in Wyoming following the release today of a statewide study of health practices at state businesses.

The study reviews the current worksite wellness program situation in Wyoming, discusses the business benefits and makes a series of recommendations for õbest practicesö to ensure that programs are successful.

õFive of the six leading causes of death in Wyoming are largely preventable with healthier lifestyles,ö said Dr Brent Sherard, Wyoming Department of Health director and state health officer. õWorksite wellness programs can go a long way toward encouraging and supporting good personal health choices.ö

õEvery day we ask Wyoming residents to -commit to your healthø with our departmentøs slogan,ö Sherard continued. õWe are also asking Wyomingøs employers to help both their workers and their own financial picture by adopting worksite wellness programs.ö

oThe :Worksite Wellness in Wyoming Best Practicesøreport shows that providing wellness programs in the workplace increases productivity, lowers employee absences, reduces healthcare costs and supports retention,ö said Paul Knepp, heart disease and stroke program manager with the Wyoming Department of Health.

According to the study, 30.3 percent of Wyoming worksites surveyed provide some type of wellness program for their employees and many (86.6 percent) of the businesses without wellness programs do not have plans to start one. More than half of worksites do support employee physical activity during work time (over lunch, during breaks, through flex-time use, etc.), and about half have healthy food options available to employees through vending machines or other sources.

Of the worksites surveyed, 64.2 percent allowed tobacco use outdoors, but not indoors. While only 10.8 percent of the worksites had no rules at all about smoking, 45.3 percent had no rules regarding spit tobacco use.

õThis document can both educate Wyoming business owners on the very real benefits of wellness programs, and help them establish or enhance existing programs,ö said Joe Grandpre, chronic disease epidemiologist with the Wyoming Department of Health. The report lists a number of õbest practicesö shown to encourage successful worksite wellness programs in Wyoming. These include:

*Building top management support

- *Integrating program with organizational/business goals
- *Use of stages of change concept
- *Creating supportive cultures
- *Incentive recruitment procedures
- *Personal contact of word of mouth
- *Targeted personal invitations
- *Targeted personal communication
- *Announcements made during meetings
- *Sense of program ownership
- *Use of health website, internet and intranet strategies

The statewide study was conducted by the University of Wyoming Survey and Analysis Center and included a survey sent to 849 state-based companies and follow-up focus group sessions. A complete listing of the questions and responses can be found in the entire document.

Both an executive summary and a comprehensive version of the *Worksite Wellness in Wyoming: Best Practices* report are available online at the Wyoming Department of Healthos home page at http://wdh.state.wy.us.

####