

## SECTION 5.13: EMPLOYEE WELLNESS PROGRAM

### **A. BACKGROUND**

The Board of County Commissioners recognizes the benefits of workplace wellness programs that support employee health and wellness; they have been shown to increase productivity, reduce absenteeism and on-the-job injuries, and improve the morale and quality of life for employees. Workplace Wellness programs can also play an important role in containing healthcare costs for both the employee and the County.

### **B. PURPOSE**

1. To empower employees to attain their best possible health.
2. To aide in reducing preventable healthcare costs for both the employees and the County.
3. Provide a supportive work environment that promotes the health and wellbeing of its employees.
4. Commit resources to foster awareness about personal health and to build a supportive workplace environment that encourages and motivates employees to make the healthy choice and take healthy actions.
5. To be a role model for other employers within Hamilton County.

### **C. RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. Employee: To explore options for making positive lifestyle choices assuring one's best possible health, be a wise consumer of medical care services, and to encourage and support co-workers.
2. Management: To serve as a role model, encourage and promote wellness initiatives and programs, consider employee requests to participate in county-sponsored programs, consider requests for flexible scheduling that might enable participation in physical activity during workday, within operational considerations, and support health and wellness services.
3. Wellness Champions Committee: The County Human Resources Department shall lead a committee with representation from a majority of County departments. The Committee will meet several times annually, as needed, to brainstorm new programs and initiatives that reach a broad spectrum of the workforce. The Committee Members may be asked to help lead certain initiatives and help communicate the workplace wellness programming in the applicable department/agency. The Committee would

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not discuss benefit plans/designs; rather assist the Human Resources Department with understanding the needs of employees throughout the County and assists in communicating the wellness programming messages to all County employees.

4. County HR Department: To develop a full spectrum of wellness programs and workplace challenges in partnership with the County's Wellness vendor and other benefit vendor partnerships; to develop and deliver timely marketing materials to promote wellness programming, and encourage appropriate use of health plan services; to work with wellness vendor to monitor completion of applicable programs for incentive eligibility; to monitor success of programs through surveys and specified measures.

#### **D. PLAN ELIGIBILITY**

All County employees, full-time and part-time, are eligible to participate in wellness program activities. Temporary, Seasonal, and Intermittent employees are not eligible, however, to earn the WellBucks incentives, but are welcome to participate in wellness programming.

Some programs and/or incentives may have specified eligibility. Communications for each program will designate eligibility.

Wellness programs coordinated through the County Human Resources Department may be considered sponsored wellness activities. Employees are eligible to participate in sponsored wellness activities during the workday subject to administrative approval within their department. Any allowed break time can be used for wellness activities in the workplace. Employees participating during the workday should maintain satisfactory job performance. Employees participating in wellness activities during non-work time/lunch breaks/before and after work do not require approval of the supervisor. Exceptions would be for those positions that do not have discretionary use of their lunch break time.

Management is encouraged to accommodate employee request for flexible work schedule to participate in wellness activities so long as work responsibilities would not be adversely affected.

#### **E. PROGRAMMING**

1. A variety of programming may be made available to employees. Programming may vary by year and may include, but not be limited to:
  - a. Personal Health Assessment
  - b. Health Screening
  - c. On-Site Classes

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- d. Workplace Challenges
  - e. Health Coaching:
2. Whenever feasible, the County will utilize resources already available through existing vendor relationships where educational information or courses are available for little or no fee.
  3. Some wellness activities may require a fee for participation. Costs for wellness activities which require a fee, such as fitness classes or weight-management classes will be paid by the employee directly to the vendor/instructor.
  4. Employees must meet all requirements of specified wellness program in order to earn the applicable credit. All County employees are eligible to participate in the additional wellness programming, unless specifically designated in program materials.

**F. CASH INCENTIVES**

The Workplace Wellness program offers cash incentives, called WellBucks for completion of certain activities/programs.

When earned, WellBucks will be added to the employee's regular paycheck, so long as the employee remains employed until the pay period in which the incentives are issued. WellBucks are considered taxable income.

Employees should carefully review the current employee benefit and wellness program communications to determine the programs available and current incentive opportunities.

WellBucks designated programs are those specifically designated and offered through the Hamilton County Human Resources Department.

Employees will typically be made aware of the programs via e-mail, website updates, and/or electronic newsletters and flyers.

**G. LIABILITY and WORKERS' COMPENSATION**

Employees may be required to sign a liability release, including, but not limited to, "Waiver of Workers' Compensation Benefits for Recreational or Fitness Activities," BWC form # C159 before participating in certain wellness activities. Participation in wellness activities at work is voluntary. If a release is required, an employee shall not participate in a Wellness related program or activity without executing an appropriate liability or workers' compensation release.

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All Hamilton County employees are covered under the Ohio Workers' Compensation Act, Ohio Revised Code Section 4123.01 et seq. Any injury sustained while participating in a Wellness activity or program shall be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine compensability. Additional information regarding an employee's rights, duties and responsibilities may be found in the Hamilton County Workers' Compensation Handbook at <http://www.hamiltoncountyohio.gov/hr/workerscomp.asp>.

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