

Promoting Worklife Balance for FSA State and County Offices and RMA Regional and Compliance Offices

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Worklife balance contributes to good health and well-being for employees and results promotes a more productive workforce. FSA supports worklife balance by providing and encouraging employees to participate in worklife programs such as wellness, employee assistance, and eldercare. Additionally, eligible employees may request use of leave programs (leave transfer and leave bank), and use of flexible work schedules to support accessing the worklife programs.

This article provides ideas for *field offices* on how to determine your employee's wellness needs in addition to suggestions on what actions to take to meet those needs. Use these suggestions to promote a rewarding worklife balance for all employees.

First and foremost, determine what your employees need by developing and conducting a worklife survey. Utilize responses to develop, organize, and advertise activities that meet those needs.

One way to advertise activities resulting from survey is through an activities calendar. Develop a calendar of events and e-mail it to your employees. Ask them to get involved and make suggestions. Additionally, display the calendar on the website and in prominent locations at the workplace. The list of "wellness activities" suggestions below can be re-formatted into all inclusive questions, placing them on the survey to garner interest, utilizing them to take action. Moreover, do not wait on survey results; utilize any of these ideas right away to show your support for wellness within your state or county office.

- ❖ Schedule monthly or quarterly 1-hour Lunch and Learn Sessions. This is a great way to get employees together and motivated as a group. Individuals tend to be successful when participating in group activities. Invite a representative (nurse, doctor, professor, EAP counselor) to speak on hot topics (nutrition, fitness, stress management, prevention and awareness (cancer, diabetes, heart), balancing work and family, change management, and workplace conflicts. An alternative to a live presentation can be facilitated through lunch-time video presentations.
- ❖ For preventive health consider holding onsite health screenings such as flu vaccination, cholesterol, blood pressure and blood glucose, bone density, etc. Employees may incur some out of pocket expenses and some of the cost may be deflected through their health benefits plan, health spending account, or flexible spending account.

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- ❖ Organize an Annual Health and Wellness Conference. Invite speakers and vendors. Include topics that interest employees and those that bring awareness to everyone. Focus on the leading diseases (heart, diabetes, cancer) and action steps to help prevent them.
- ❖ Order informational materials from health organizations and make information available to all employees.
- ❖ Motivate employees toward physical fitness and healthy lifestyles. Encourage them to participate in Agency fitness activities such as Federal Fitness Day and the Healthierfeds Campaign.
- ❖ Form a walking group and encourage employees to walk during lunch or another authorized time. Walk with them. Provide employees pedometers so they can keep track of their steps. Pedometers may remind all of the importance of including at least 30 minutes of physical activity into their day.
- ❖ Encourage employees to tour and obtain a membership to a fitness center. Some fitness centers, including those outside of USDA, may offer discounts rates to Government employees who pay their membership fee through payroll deduction.
- ❖ Healthy snacks and foods are essential. At staff meetings replace the chips and dips and cookies with fruit and vegetables. Ensure that the vending machine in the snack room consists of healthy snacks.
- ❖ Help employees who want to stop smoking. Coordinate with an organization such as the American Heart Association onsite Smoking Cessation Program. Allow employees time away from the office to participate in the class.
- ❖ Weight Watchers provides onsite weight management programs. This could be a great lunch period activity for employees. Lunch-period activities allow employees to fit helpful activities into their schedule when it is difficult to do so after work.
- ❖ Recognize employees who put forth great efforts in the area of health and wellness. Recognitions (examples: time off award, certificate, reimbursement) are motivators and employees appreciate this supervisory recognition.
- ❖ Form a support group for employees who are caregivers of elderly family members. This gives employees support through networking; they learn from others, and it ensures they are not alone. Ask a volunteer to facilitate a monthly meeting. Invite outside speakers to share a topic of interest. In addition, provide them elder care resources such as the Eldercare Locator (<http://www.n4a.org/programs/eldercare-locator/>) and the FFAS Employee Assistance Program (EAP) at 800-222-0364, TTY 888-262-7848, www.foh4you.com.

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- ❖ The EAP provides counseling and website information for parents with issues and concerns. The EAP is available 24/7 and it is free and confidential according to the law. Promote the EAP throughout the year. Information about EAP may be found in Handbook 34-PM at ftp://ftp.fsa.usda.gov/manuals/34-pm_r00_a02.pdf
- ❖ Remind eligible employees about flexible options such as the leave programs (leave transfer, leave bank), and the Telework Program. These programs have proven to help employees balance work, personal, and family responsibilities. For example, an employee is scheduled to have surgery. Rather than taking leave for the entire time of recovery, the employees can telework at least part time and full time before returning to work. This provides a balance for the employee and the supervisor. Refer to Handbook 17-PM handbook for more information about these programs at ftp://ftp.fsa.usda.gov/manuals/17-pm_r02_a06.pdf

These are just some ways to provide a rewarding balance for employees. We care about our employees and we want our Leaders to support us in encouraging and promoting worklife balance programs for our entire workforce.

As your Worklife Program Manager I am available to assist you with promoting worklife plans for your employees. Please contact me with questions, comments, or suggestions at juliet.mcbride@wdc.usda.gov or call 202-401-0683, TTY 202-205-9057.

Note:

This article provides information for **Promoting Worklife Balance for FSA and RMA Field Office Employees**. Worklife balance is important and promoted for all offices.

FSA County Executive Directors shall cascade their questions or comments through the State Office

