



The Top 9 Benefits of Joining Occupational Health and Employee Well-Being Programs

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Occupational health and workplace wellness programs have the same basic goal: employee well-being. Combining them just makes sense. And with the latest platform and digital technologies, delivery can be seamless and more effective than ever.

Occupational Health and Safety vs. Employee Well-Being Programs

Managers are familiar with Occupational Health and Safety programs because often, they're a requirement. This specialized branch of health services focuses on the physical and psychological well-being of employees, emphasizing injury and illness control, prevention and safety. In its simplest form, it includes hazard control, injury and illness prevention, and health services including screenings and surveillance, safety training, and education. Health and safety compliance [benefits organizations and their workers](#), and satisfies basic safety requirements.



Employee health and well-being programs, on the other hand, are not required by law but support similar goals. Work-sponsored well-being programs are health initiatives are increasingly available, even for remote-work employees.

Think of wellness as a prevention program that goes above and beyond safety requirements and a traditional [employee benefits plan](#). It can include whatever health topics a population needs, from weight management to mental health and everything in between. Employee wellness programs are known for improving health outcomes, building employee relationships, powering positive company culture, and strengthening the workforce – literally and figuratively.

Each of these workplace programs aim at improving overall employee health outcomes and creating a great company culture. It makes sense that a growing number of organizations leveling up their occupational health and safety programming to include employee well-being content too. Here are 9 reasons why combining employee well-being into existing occupational health and safety can be mutually beneficial.

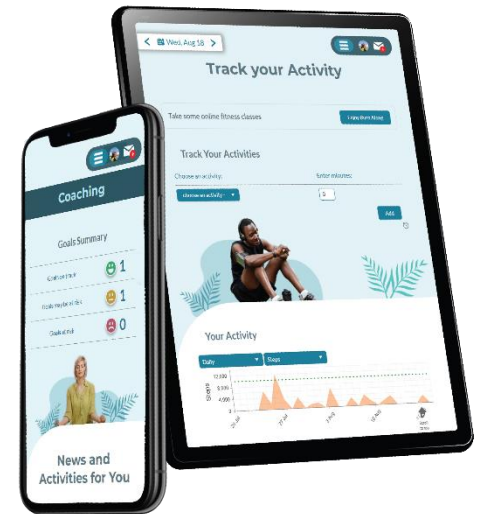
9 Reasons to Combine Workplace Well-Being and Occupational Health Programs

1. Level-up to Meet Post-Pandemic Expectations

The increased focus on employee safety and well-being in the wake of the pandemic has made robust wellness and safety programs necessary. Employees expect them as a basic benefit, and for good reason: health and safety programming has been shown to improve overall employee health outcomes, morale, culture, and productivity, while lowering employee turnover and [attracting top talent](#). Adjusting to evolving expectations by creating an engaging [post-pandemic safety and well-being program](#) is key.

2. Go Virtual

Possibly the most impactful vestige of the pandemic is the number of employees continuing to work remotely, either full or part time. Therefore, virtual wellness and safety programming that's consolidated into [a single, easy to use program](#) is a requirement: remote and hybrid employees must be able to access all of the same programming that in-person employees enjoy, in order for it to impact the whole workforce. Support virtual and hybrid employees with [fully-virtual safety and well-being programs](#).



3. Save Money

Lost productivity from poor worker health costs US companies \$575 billion a year, [according to research](#) from Integrated Benefits Institute (IBI). Illness and injuries that result in time off work or lower productivity while at work can be costly; but helping workers stay safe and healthy is more achievable now than ever before. Organizations focused on well-being in at work can avoid wasted money and a enjoy [healthy bottom line](#) by preventing illness and injury through a culture of health among employees.

4. Foster a Culture of Health

The latest workplace wellness programs focus on total health: physical, mental, [emotional](#), and occupational. A major goal is to improve workplace culture, creating a positive environment conducive to healthy, safe living and working practices. Programming can include mental health awareness; [financial wellness](#); healthy habits like hand washing and sanitizing workstations; physical activity like walking during breaks, flex time to exercise, or incorporating some healthy competition through [wellness challenges](#); stress management including lunch and learn workshops or flex time; and more, possibly including sleep hygiene, tobacco cessation or financial wellness programming, and more.



5. Data Security: Resolve Concerns with Best Practices

Concerns about [health data security](#) can be a major barrier to participation, especially in all-virtual employee well-being and safety programs. Data security is ever evolving, and the latest well-being and safety programs use up-to-the-minute best practices. When employees are expected to log health information, access health documents, and even communicate with health care professionals through a single platform, data security needs to be top-notch.

6. Lower Absenteeism

Wellness coordinators and healthcare professionals can assess securely stored employee well-being information and help leaders manage absenteeism. Workplace wellness professionals aim to decrease the amount of illness and sick days by preventing illness through prevention, like influenza and COVID-19 vaccination campaigns and general healthy lifestyle programming.



7. Early Detection

Offering health screenings facilitates early detection of disease. By identifying health concerns early, employees can take action toward improving their health, reducing their time away from work and lowering the medical expenses related to the disease. Basic screenings include body weight, smoking, physical activity, blood pressure, and diet, according to the American Heart Association.

Biometric screening is frequently done annually as an important component of a robust wellness program. Regularly gathering biometric data helps you track progress over time to assess the effectiveness of your wellness program. Incentives like lowered insurance premiums are an effective way to encourage employees to participate in screenings.

8. Promote Prevention and Improve Morale

For workplaces that already offer occupational health programming, adding wellness can introduce key well-being and educational content to existing programs. Beyond the basic safety requirements, wellness can actually enhance the effectiveness of your existing safety programming.



9. Greater Access to Resources

In organizations that don't have a workplace wellness program yet, employees may be missing important health resources. Wellness programming encourages employees to use services already included in benefits packages (including free or discounted screenings, influenza and COVID-19 vaccinations, and

many more), which can substantially add to their overall well-being and decrease absenteeism. The combination of workplace wellness and safety programming can also provide additional resources for health education and a safer, healthier lifestyle.

7 Ways to Combine Employee Well-Being into Occupational Health and Safety

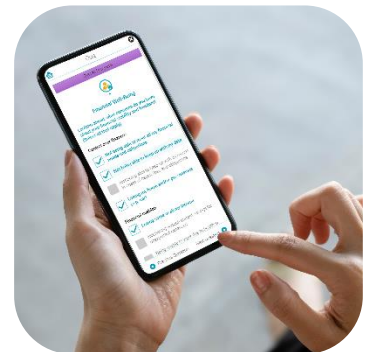
Not sure how to get started? Creating a workplace wellness program, or building upon existing programming, begins with these basic steps.

1. Leadership Support

[Leadership support](#) and involvement is essential for occupational health and safety program success, the same is true for workplace wellness. Leaders are able to boost the effectiveness of wellness programming at almost no cost by encouraging employees, spotlighting wellness champions, sharing employees' wellness success stories, and actively participating themselves. This top-down support for wellness is [known to](#) encourage and empower employees to participate.

2. Workforce Health Assessments

[Workforce health assessments](#) like biometric screenings are a key way to kick off an effective wellness program. Screenings provide baseline health data of your employees, giving managers an idea of what types of topics should have special focus. For example, if body weight is a problem for the majority of workers, weight loss initiatives can be a central goal. Starting with baseline data will also allow you to track progress over time.



Health assessments that are more comprehensive than ever before are becoming popular with employers, ones that have a strong psychological component, such as risk of anxiety, depression, indicators for resiliency, as well as discretionary effort are key to linking health, productivity, engagement and safety.

3. Create a Wellness Committee

A wellness committee is a group of employees who provide input and help plan the wellness program, encourage others to participate, and generally act as wellness ambassadors. This gives employees a sense of ownership and direct involvement in their wellness, as well as the well-being of their coworkers. Ask around for volunteers and get a good representation of different types of workers. If your organization has multiple locations, you might want to have a representative from each location. These people are involved in first steps like planning, ongoing support like communication and answering questions, and logistics like hanging posters and delivering incentives.

4. Gather Employee Input and Opinions

Beyond a wellness committee, all employees should have the opportunity to share their opinions and provide input to wellness programming. Sharing surveys and having an open door policy with wellness coordinators gives all employees another way to be involved in the program.

5. Set Goals

Go back to your employee health assessment and review the data. What does your population need? Setting goals relevant to your workforce will help wellness be the most effective. Goals can be set for the current year and for the long term. Examples of year-specific goals are number of employees screened; number participating in challenges; frequency of promotion like weekly emails, monthly wellness champion spotlights, and quarterly challenges. Examples of long terms goals include improved health indicators like lower BMI and cholesterol levels; increasing participation; and decreased healthcare spending.

6. Design Specific Programs

Choose a few topics to focus on throughout a year. For example, doing an ongoing weight loss program all year with smaller initiatives throughout, including quarterly 4-6 week [challenges](#) focused on walking, nutrition, stress reduction, and screenings may be a good starting place. Read our blog article [The Recipe for Successful Wellness Challenges](#) to help you get started. These can be enhanced with lunch-and-learn educational presentations, and adjustments to the physical workspace and policy. These could include adding bike racks, mapping out nearby walking routes, establishing flex time so employees can exercise, providing access to healthy food by arranging for a healthy vending machine, scheduling a healthy food truck to come at lunch time, or more. [Health coaching](#) is also a proven way to support employees on their journey to improved well-being.

7. Create a Wellness Incentive Program

Incentivizing wellness can also boost program participation and provide a gentle motivator to get employees thinking about their overall health and taking action. In the US, the most effective way to do this is by tying participation to benefits. This can include an insurance premium reduction for those who participate in the initial biometric screening and/or most of the challenges throughout the year. Other [wellness incentives](#) include raffles for gift cards, sports club memberships, sports equipment, or donating points to charity, etc. for employees that finish challenges, attend lunch and learns, etc. While there is [controversy over wellness incentives](#), it's still a common component of wellness programs.



Summary

The pandemic has changed employee expectations and the way organizations are run. Many more employees work remotely at least part of the time, and concerns about health and safety are at a peak. An effective way for organizations to adapt is to level up health and safety programming by adding employee well-being to existing health and safety programs.

Beyond basic safety requirements, wellness can enhance current programs and include everyone in a workforce – even those who work remotely. Up-to-date employee well-being portals offer all programming in one, consolidated place for a user-friendly, 100%-virtual program. Improved employee well-being and safety, with greater reach and depth, is a win-win.

About CoreHealth

CoreHealth by Carebook is a total well-being company trusted by global companies to power their health and wellness programs. Our wellness portals help maximize health, engagement and productivity for over 3.5 million employees worldwide. We believe people are the driving force of organizations and supporting them to make behavior changes to improve employee health is in everyone's best interest.

About the Author

[Laura Neuffer](#), M.S., has 10 years of experience in corporate wellness. After earning a bachelor's degree in Public Health and Health Education at Oregon State University, she began working with a corporate wellness company as an account manager, working directly with on-site staff to plan, deliver, and analyze worksite health programs. She went on to earn a master's degree in Communication Management from the University of Southern California. Laura's work at CoreHealth to help create technology and programming that is used in worksite wellness programs around the world. Laura is also a registered yoga instructor and a former university adjunct professor of communications.

