IT'S NATIONAL WELLNESS MONTH

WELLNESS CHALLENGES AT WORK CAN PROVIDE A FUN, MOTIVATING SPIN ON PROMOTION OF HEALTH BEHAVIORS

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, over 90 percent of workers spend more than 40 hours per week at work, which makes the workplace a great place to target and change health behaviors. Employers have the potential to positively impact employee health in a number of ways, including making environmental and cultural changes. As part of cultural change, wellness challenges at work can provide a fun, motivating spin on promotion of health behaviors.

Here are a few fun wellness challenges to try in your workplace this month:

**Daily Habit Challenge**

Daily habit challenges work well over shorter, 2-4 week periods. The idea is to come up with a different healthy habit that participants must do each day. Habits can be anything from packing your own lunch to taking a daily walk. Each behavior earns a raffle entry, with drawings at the end of each week.

**Team Wellness Challenge**

Team challenges can foster a sense of community and motivate people to a common purpose. Participants work toward large, group goals, such as "walk 5,000 miles" or "lose 50 pounds" and keep track of group results on a white board or poster, usually displayed in a common area. Employers can offer an incentive for the whole group, such as weekly fitness classes at the office or a free, healthy lunch.

**Participation Challenge**

This challenge encourages participants to accomplish a goal task a certain number of times over a set period, rewarding those who reach a certain number. For example, if an employer subsidizes a health club membership they can challenge their employees to attend 25 fitness classes in 30 days. Employers can also challenge employees to do other things like bring their own healthy lunch (instead of eating out) 15 times per month or to walk 5 miles a day.

**Plank Challenge**

Planking is great for core stability and can be done in a short amount of time. Employers can challenge participating employees to plank a set time each day, with times increasing five seconds each day to reach a certain time goal over 3-5 weeks. Plank challenges can be done as a team (where those who have the best completion percentage win) or individually.

Building a culture of wellness in the workplace takes time, but fun challenges like those listed above can help engage employees and bring them together toward the common goals of increased physical activity and overall better health.

Source: Written by Alexandra Black, Health Promotion Manager at IHRSASource: HealthFinder - U.S. Department of Health and Human Services