



Cary Conway

TBGH Media Contact:

Telephone: 972-731-9242

Email: cary@conwaycommunication.com

Texas Business Group on Health Reports on Employers' Strategies to Promote Healthy Choices

Efforts underway to increase access to physical activity and healthier foods in the workplace

DALLAS – Dec. 15, 2015 – Texas employers are modifying their worksite environments to positively influence employee health according to a new survey from the non-profit [Texas Business Group on Health](#) (TBGH). The poll conducted in partnership with the [Texas Department of State Health Services](#) (DSHS) examined the efforts and views of employers around worksite wellness programs and provides benchmarking information on how Texas employers are adapting their environment and culture to encourage employees to make healthy choices.

A summary of the Employers Benchmarking Survey: Worksite Wellness—2015 report is available here: http://tbgh.org/documents/TBGH_Worksite_Wellness-2015.pdf

“Given the amount of time employees spend at their workplace, employers have a huge opportunity to positively influence the health of their workers and their families,” said Marianne Fazen, TBGH president and CEO. “This research shows that Texas employers are making strides to help employees adopt behaviors that promote health and well-being. The ultimate goal, of course, is to improve health outcomes.”

Nearly 300 Texas employers from 40 counties in all regions of the state, representing employers of all sizes and industries, participated in the survey.

Survey findings include:

- Almost half of the employers with 50-1,000 employees subsidize the cost of membership at a fitness facility or sponsor wellness competitions.
- Almost half of all employers implemented at least one strategy to encourage healthy eating to reduce the frequency and severity of diabetes, with larger employers leading the way.
- The most commonly reported barriers to achieving worksite wellness are difficulties with employees finding time (48% for large employers) and with reaching employees located across various sites (49% for large employers).
- Based on TBGH's 2014 Texas Employers Benchmarking Survey: Tobacco Use Policies and Programs survey report, in only one year the prevalence of tobacco-free campuses increased from 24% to 31%, while 35% of responding employers now have smoke-free campuses. A similar number of employers now report having policies addressing e-cigarettes and vapor devices.
- The ultimate goal of worksite wellness programs and policies is improvement in health outcomes, but many employers focus on more immediate measures such as participation rates and changes in health-related costs.

“The cost of illness is not just in medical claims and absenteeism, but also lost productivity from employees with health problems who are still coming to work,” said Nicole Hare-Everline, director of Employee Wellness and EAP, City of Houston. “Health doesn’t happen in a doctor’s office; it happens in people’s everyday lives – and the workplace is a big part of that.”

Designed to not only document what Texas employers are doing to improve employee health, the survey is also intended to highlight the availability of the many free or low-cost strategies and resources available such as encouraging walking breaks or offering healthy foods at the worksite to build a robust culture of health.

TBGH and DSHS plan to conduct this survey periodically to monitor changes over time. DSHS provides free technical assistance related to worksite wellness through its Work Well Texas program, which can be accessed at www.wellness.state.tx.us.

“Work Well Texas is a one-stop-shop resource for building low-cost, effective wellness programming,” said Rocky Payne, statewide wellness coordinator for DSHS. “We offer tools, templates, guides and advice to help employers develop comprehensive initiatives because we want to see health improve for all Texans, including our workforce.”

About the Texas Business Group on Health

The Texas Business Group on Health (TBGH), founded in 1985, is a non-profit employer-led coalition dedicated to promoting healthcare innovation, accountability, quality and value in Texas communities. TBGH serves as a valuable resource for Texas employers in health benefits design and healthcare purchasing issues and advocates employer interests in Texas healthcare legislation and policy development. For additional information, visit www.tbgh.org.

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