

“Many Hands Make Light Work” Health Promotion Committees

Those responsible for health promotions may not be able to devote 100% of their time to the management of the program. He/she can benefit by utilizing the creative ideas for the promotion and implementation of health promotion activities. The program coordinator should have a committee of employee volunteers. This team of volunteers can have input at the planning stage, take ownership during the implementation, and serve as a liaison for the employee population.

Q: How many people should be on the committee?

The committee should consist of one program coordinator and 5-10 members who are formal or informal leaders of various employee constituencies (e.g., labor, top management, middle management, and support staff.)

Q: What type of diversity should exist on the committee?

Care should be taken to ensure that the health promotion committee is not solely composed of young, physically fit employees. This may lead to the alienation of others and possibly to a limited perspective on health promotion issues. The following are examples of the types or characteristics of employees who would contribute to a well-rounded committee:

- *Smoker and/or ex-smoker*
- *Employee(s) who has experienced a heart attack, stroke or cancer*
- *Overweight employees*
- *Company cafeteria employee*
- *Communications employee (e.g. graphics artist, editor of the employee newsletter)*
- *Personnel or Human Resource department employees*
- *Labor union representative*
- *Medical department employee (e.g. doctor, nurse, physical therapist)*

Q: When should a committee be established?

This depends on when the health promotion activities will be implemented. The health promotion committee will be a critical element in the successful promotion, implementation and evaluation of the health promotion activities.

Q: What is the best way to recruit a health promotion coordinator and committee members?

If using low-level implementation and the emphasis is on awareness building a manager may wish to hand-pick a person to be the program coordinator. The program coordinator (with or without the assistance of managers) in turn may select people whom he/she feels would meet the qualifications for committee membership. He/she may also wish to place a brief announcement in the employee newsletter to introduce the wellness program and to ask for volunteers to help with the planning and implementation. Some specific ways to recruit new members might include:

- *Make announcements at kick-off events*
- *Flyer/memo to all employees*
- *Bulletin Boards*
- *Notice posted in break rooms*
- *Provide a place on the employee interest survey to indicate interest in being a health promotion committee member.*

Q: What is the best way to select committee members?

First contact all those who are interested to explain the roles and responsibilities and to determine interest and enthusiasm. At this time you may either “hand-select,” use an interview process, or have upper management make appointments.

Q: What type of orientation should the committee be given?

Topics should include the components of the health promotion program and philosophy, a job description, and the date and time of meetings.

Q: How should committee membership commitment be determined?

Limit duration of membership to 1-2 years. Stagger expiration dates of members so that new members are rotated onto the committee every six months.

Q: What are some ways to make committee members feel valued?

Provide recognition to committee members (photo in employee newsletter, special gift when member is “retired” from the committee, write a letter to members’ bosses/supervisors informing them of the contributions the member makes to the committee. Provide lunch during committee meetings). Listed below are several other ways:

- *Introduce committee members at health promotion events*
- *Print the names and photo’s of committee members in the company newsletter*
- *Print the names of committee members on the program’s letterhead*
- *Purchase special t-shirts or caps and ask committee members to wear them to health promotion events*
- *Hold a committee retreat for planning purposes at an off-site location*
- *Give a perfect attendance or spirit award*
- *Have a drawing for a door prize at each meeting*
- *Tell them often that you appreciate their service*

Q: What is the best way to revitalize a committee?

Here are some ways to infuse new enthusiasm into a stale committee:

- *Add new members---the energy of new committee members is contagious*
- *Hold demonstrations—invite vendors and agencies to demonstrate their products*
- *Pass along information—hand out articles regarding health issues and model worksite health promotion*
- *Have fun---celebrate member’s birthdays, special events, long-time anniversary dates, holidays and the like. Make it fun to attend the meetings/*
- *Attend wellness conferences—have committee members attend local worksite wellness conferences and meetings of the wellness council.*



Source: “Working With Health Promotion Committees,” The Cooper Institute. 2004.