

The Affordable Care Act and Total Worker Health: Implications for workplace health

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What is health promotion?

- World Health Organization: “process of enabling people to take control over their health and its determinants, and thereby improve their health”
- Workplace context: health promotion interventions target smoking, diet, physical activity, stress management
- Diet and physical activity often referred to as “wellness”

Health promotion and the ACA:

Three main components

1. Waiving cost-sharing for preventive services
2. Providing funding for community preventive services
3. **Creating workplace wellness programs**

Grants issued in 2011. CDC is studying each of these programs to see which produces the best health outcomes

What qualifies as workplace wellness under the ACA?

- Takes into account organizational culture and leadership
- Must be evidence-based
- Includes evaluation component
- Evaluation elements include financial data/ROI, health improvements, quality of life, productivity

Examples of workplace health promotion programs

- “Step challenges” using FitBit or similar
- Smoking cessation programs
- Incentive-based weight loss programs
- Educational seminars on health and wellness
- Healthy cooking classes
- Community gardening
- Weekly fruit basket deliveries



What is Total Worker Health?

- NIOSH: “Total Worker Health (TWH) is a strategy integrating occupational safety and health protection with health promotion to prevent worker injury and to promote worker health and wellbeing”
- What does that actually mean?

Health protection vs. health promotion

- **Health protection:** traditional occupational safety and health
- **Health promotion:** health-enhancing activities not part of regular work activities

How can safety and wellness be mutually enhancing?

- Addressing both organizational and individual risk factors for poor health
- Shift away from “victim-blaming” mentality of traditional wellness programs
- Health promotion is **not** a replacement for occupational safety and health



Examples of TWH programs

- Occupational respiratory protection program that also addresses smoking cessation to improve overall respiratory health
- Ergonomic programs that address work posture and lifting as well as exercise programs that strengthen muscles and improve joint health