



*Sedgwick County...
working for you*

SEDGWICK COUNTY, KANSAS
COMMUNICATIONS

NEWS

CONTACT: SEDGWICK COUNTY COMMUNICATIONS 316-660-9370 FAX: 316-383-7509

July 9, 2009

Contact: Jennifer (Gluszek) McCausland
Kristi Zukovich
316-660-9370

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Worksite Wellness: Important Tool in Combating Rising Health Care Costs

(Sedgwick County, Kansas) – More bad health news was made available last week: the Trust for America's Health released their annual overweight/obesity report Thursday. In that report, Kansas is the 18th fattest state, up 9 from two years ago. The number of obese adults in Kansas has doubled in less than twenty years.

Being overweight or obese is not just bad for an individual's self esteem, although it can have damaging effects on personal self-worth too. Being overweight or obese can cause high blood pressure, heart attacks, and several forms of cancer. These chronic illnesses come at quite a cost, both physically and financially. These costs are often shared by individuals and employers.

-more-

One way employers can help is by starting a worksite wellness program. When implementing a worksite wellness program, a review of 73 published studies shows that on average a \$3.50 to \$1 savings-to-cost ratio results. Savings come from reduced absenteeism and health care costs. A U.S. Department of Health and Human Services report in 2002 revealed that at worksites with physical activity programs, employers have:

- Reduced healthcare costs by 20 to 55%
- Reduced short-term sick leave by 6-32%
- Increased productivity by 2-52%

Although starting a worksite wellness program may include some start-up costs, there are low-price strategies you can use. Here are a few:

- Start a wellness committee of employees to organize events
- Sponsor a company fitness challenge
- Create and support lunchtime/break-time walking and running clubs
- Provide safe and clean stairwells and promote their use
- Allow flexible work schedules so employees can exercise
- Ask voluntary health associations and/or public health agencies to offer onsite nutrition education classes
- Form a support group for those wanting to lose weight
- Support “walking meetings” where staff meet while they walk
- Provide healthy snacks in vending machines, break rooms or at company events.

For more information about wellness programs or health services in our community, please contact the Sedgwick County Health Department at 660-7350 or email health@sedgwick.gov.

-end-