



Network for a Healthy California—Worksite Program

Take Action! **Program Overview**

Empower Your Employees to Better Health...Greater Productivity



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Take Action! is a worksite employee wellness program that helps California employers help their employees in the fight against chronic diseases, overweight, and obesity. Poor nutrition and physical inactivity have reached epidemic levels in California, a fact that has significantly decreased the productivity of the workforce for many companies.

THE RISK IS GROWING

California residents have gained 360 million pounds of excess weight in the past ten years, a rate that is among the fastest in the country. A third of our children, one in four teens, and over half of all adults are already overweight or obese.^{1,2,3}

Not only are chronic diseases, overweight, and obesity a detriment to health, but employees in poor health diminish the well being of the worksite. Unhealthy workers require more medical care, take more sick days, and are less productive on the job. This is a grave problem for employers as over half of all Californians today are at increased risk for heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke, arthritis-related disabilities, depression, sleep disorders, and some cancers.

THE COSTS ARE ESCALATING

Rates of chronic disease and disability associated with poor diet and inactivity continue to escalate year after year and are costing California \$28 billion annually.⁴ Employers are bearing a sizable portion of these costs, primarily in terms of lost productivity and the increased cost of health and disability insurance. However, companies that invest in wellness programs report health care savings of nearly \$3 for every \$1 invested.⁵

WELLNESS PROGRAMS PROVIDE A GOOD RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Just like the public health risk of cigarette smoking 30 years ago, adult obesity and its related conditions can be reversed through education and wise action. California's business leaders realize that standing by and doing nothing will not help reduce turnover, excessive sick leave costs, workers compensation claims, high absenteeism, or reduced earnings. Instead, business leaders are empowering themselves to be a catalyst for change in their employees' lives and the worksite.



POWERFUL TOOLS ARE AVAILABLE

In an effort to help more businesses promote health in the worksite, the *Network for a Healthy California—Worksite Program* has created the [California Fit Business Kit \(Kit\)](#). The Kit contains **ten powerful tools** to help employers implement simple and low-cost health promotion efforts at their worksites. The broad focus of the Kit is on increasing the availability of healthy foods and providing adequate opportunities for employees to be physically active while at work. Since employees spend nearly half of their waking hours at work, employee wellness programs can produce dramatic results.



TAKE ACTION!

One of the Kit tools is *Take Action!*, a free, adaptable, 10-week worksite employee wellness program. It encourages fruit and vegetable consumption and regular physical activity while fostering teamwork and boosting morale. *Take Action!* includes all of the major components necessary to establish a well thought out wellness program, but also leaves enough room for you to infuse your own creativity and genius that fits within your business!

By participating in *Take Action!*, you are setting an example for your employees. If leaders show they have made health a priority, employees will do the same. This shift will result not only in increased productivity and reduced health care costs, but also in the retention and loyalty of your employees.

The information in this guide can help make participation easy and fun for everyone involved. By following the steps presented here, you can encourage and motivate your employees to get involved, stay involved, and most importantly, improve their health!

“Over two thirds of our employees participated in *Take Action!*, far exceeding our expectations. It was a nice addition to our overall wellness program to promote healthy eating along with healthy lifestyles.”

– VP Administration,
Lundberg Family Farms

Take Action! Program Details

TAKE ACTION! BASICS

- Participants set their own fruit and vegetable consumption or physical activity goals that they will work to achieve and maintain for 10 weeks. **Note:** 10 weeks is the suggested duration of *Take Action!* and it is referred to as a 10 week program throughout all materials and forms. The length of the program can be easily altered however, to meet the needs of your organization. We **do not suggest** shortening the implementation portion of *Take Action!* to less than **6 weeks**.
- Participants are members of teams led by Team Captains who provide support, encouragement, and motivation to help participants reach their goals.
- Teams and individuals are rewarded for their achievements through incentives and recognition.

"I am encouraged with the results and feedback so far... it has success written all over it!"

– *Health Promotion Coordinator,
Sierra Pacific Industries*

CHOOSING TO FOCUS ON FRUIT AND VEGETABLE CONSUMPTION OR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Research shows that behavior change is most effective when one behavior is focused on at a time. For that reason, we recommend that you choose either fruit and vegetable consumption or physical activity to focus on when implementing



Take Action! at your worksite. But if you're interested in focusing on both behaviors, *Take Action!* can be implemented in two phases: the first 10-weeks on fruit and vegetable consumption and the second 10-weeks on physical activity, or vice versa. And once you've completed both modules of *Take Action!* and are feeling up for a new challenge, your worksite can opt for a third trial of *Take Action!* where both modules are combined! Are you ready to *Take Action!*?

IT'S SIMPLE...

Participants set their own goals, work in teams to meet their goals, and are recognized by their peers and management for their efforts.

SETTING GOALS IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS!

Whether your worksite decides to focus on increasing fruit and vegetable consumption or increasing physical activity levels, the key is for participants to set realistic, achievable goals for the 10-week program. Trying to jump from leading a sedentary lifestyle to being active 60 minutes a day is simply not realistic.

To help with goal setting, it is recommended that participants keep track of their fruit and vegetable consumption or physical activity for an entire week before the start of *Take Action!*. That way, when they set their 10-week goal, they will have a point of reference for their current level of fruit and vegetable consumption and/or physical activity and can establish an achievable goal more confidently.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Fruit and Vegetable Consumption:

- It is recommended that adults eat 3½ to 6½ cups of fruits and vegetables every day. The specific amount that a person should eat is determined by their age, gender, and physical activity level (see the *Fruit and Vegetable—Making Healthy Choices* handout).

Physical Activity:

- In general, it is recommended that adults are physically active 60 minutes a day on most days of the week to prevent unhealthy weight gain over time. However, a minimum of 30 minutes a day is recommended for good health and to reduce the risk of chronic diseases, while 90 minutes a day is recommended if you have lost weight and want to keep it off (see the *Physical Activity—Making Healthy Choices* handout).
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Quick Start Timeline for *Take Action!*

Take Action! is designed with employers and employees in mind. Simply follow these four phases of *Take Action!* (Planning, Promotion, Activity, and Evaluation & Celebration) and your program will be a roaring success!

PLANNING PHASE: 6 WEEKS

Step 1: Obtain Company Support

Support from senior management (CEO/President, HR Director, and CFO) is a key component to the success of *Take Action!* in your worksite. Senior management will be interested in *Take Action!* because it is designed to improve employee health, which directly impacts productivity and lowers absenteeism. With management's full support, a culture can be established where employees feel valued, supported, and empowered to take charge of their personal health and also make positive changes to their worksite environment.

- Present *Take Action!* to your CEO and executive leadership to gain their commitment. Talking Points and Presentation Tips can be found in the Program Coordinator and Planning Committee section of the *Take Action!* Web site.

TIP:

If your employees are represented by a union, obtaining the support of the union is key to ensuring participation of employees in your program. Unions have the same financial incentive to keep their members healthy.

Step 2: Choose a Program Coordinator and Planning Committee

Program Coordinator

The Program Coordinator is responsible for the overall management of *Take Action!*. Typically, the role of the Program Coordinator is held by a Health and Wellness Director, Human Resources staff, or Health/Safety Manager. However, it's completely up to your organization who is assigned to this task. The person selected for this role should have a champion's attitude for promoting and organizing employee participation.



Responsibilities of the Program Coordinator Include:

- Recruiting a planning committee
- Chairing the planning committee
- Communicating with management, Team Captains, and employee participants about the roll out of *Take Action!*
- Evaluating the success of *Take Action!*

Essential Skills of an Effective Program Coordinator:

- Ability to manage a group of up to 10 people
- Highly organized
- Ability to communicate effectively with management and employees alike

More detailed information about the role of the Program Coordinator can be found in the Program Coordinator and Planning Committee section of the *Take Action!* Web site.

Planning Committee

The Planning Committee is responsible for promoting *Take Action!*, planning activities, recruiting Team Captains, conducting the evaluation, and providing overall support to the Program Coordinator. The size of the committee will depend on the size of your company.

Who to Include in your Planning Committee:

- The committee should include staff representing management, human resources, primary service/production operations, computer support, and communications.
- If you already have a wellness or health promotion committee, incorporating the *Take Action!* lifestyle intervention approach will add a new dimension to company wellness activities.

Structuring your Planning Committee:

- Break your planning committee into smaller working groups to focus on the different program phases, such as Team Captain/Participant recruitment, leadership/spirit, celebrations/events, rewards/incentives, and evaluation.
- It is important to meet with your planning committee on a regular basis. We suggest twice per month.

More detailed information about the role of the Planning Committee can be found in the Program Coordinator and Planning Committee section of the *Take Action!* Web site.

Step 3: Conduct a Workplace Assessment

Once you have management support, have decided on a Program Coordinator, and have chosen your Planning Committee members, it's time to take a closer look at your worksite. Encouraging employees to eat more fruits and vegetables and be more physically active is great, but if the surrounding work environment is filled with unhealthy snacks and sugary drinks in the vending machines, tempting donuts at staff meetings, or employees who are glued to their desks for hours on end, asking them to make healthier choices is going to be very difficult.

[Check for Health](#) is a simple and practical assessment tool that helps you identify the good, the bad, and the ugly at your worksite. After you complete the assessment, you will have a clear picture about the current state of your worksite environment and will be given ideas for how you can start changing your worksite to support fruit and vegetable consumption and physical activity. Creating a healthy worksite environment will empower employees to make healthy choices during the workday and at home with their families.

Step 4: Get Started

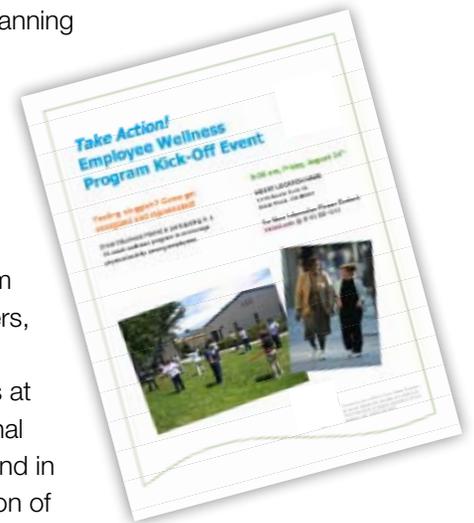
Ok, you're ready to go! You have your Planning Committee and you know how you can make changes to your worksite to help make the healthy choice the easy choice. Below are some practical steps and resources that will help you get started:

1. *Hold your First Meeting With the Planning Committee*—Start planning early on how you want to implement *Take Action!*. Involving your Planning Committee from the beginning makes the process easier and will help you to develop a support system for implementing worksite wellness activities and policies.
2. *Decide Which Tracking Sheets to Use*—There are different versions of Participant and Team Captain tracking sheets for you to choose from based on characteristics of your worksite.
3. *Recruit and Train Team Captains*—Your Team Captains are essential to the success of the program and should be carefully selected and trained. Like you, they need to be champions for improving employee health and morale.
4. *Plan Your Kick Off Event*—This event will be a fun time for employees to come together to learn a little more about the program, enjoy healthy activities, and meet their team members.
5. *Encourage and Support Program Participation*—Make sure that every person in your organization has a Team Captain and the opportunity to join a team. But remember, *Take Action!* is a voluntary program.
6. *Secure Incentive Items*—Incentives are a great way to keep participants motivated and excited about the program. Ask your management to provide incentives or you can solicit donations from local businesses and vendors.

PROMOTION PHASE: 4 WEEKS

Step 1: Distribute Promotional Materials

Promote *Take Action!* through senior management, the Planning Committee, Team Captains, and directly to participants. Use a variety of resources and methods to promote the program including emails, flyers, paycheck stuffers, and announcements at meetings. Promotional materials can be found in the Resources section of the *Take Action!* Web site.



Step 2: Team Captains Hold First Team Meetings with Participants

This meeting should be mandatory for every participant. This will be an opportunity for participants to ask questions, meet their team members, and register for the program.

TIP:

Make sure the first team meetings take place **two weeks** before the Kick Off event so that participants have time to track their typical fruit and vegetable consumption or physical activity for a week.

Three main topics for Team Captains to cover during their meeting:

1. *Overview of Take Action!*—Provide participants with an overview of the program, a description of their role in *Take Action!*, and what it means to be part of the team.
2. *The Goal Setting Process*—Explain to participants how to set a realistic goal. We suggest that participants keep track of their typical fruit and vegetable consumption or physical activity for the next 7 days. They will then have a better idea of what goal is right for them as they fill out their registration forms prior to the Kick Off event.
3. *Register Participants*—Begin the registration process today. Team Captains should walk through the paperwork with the entire team and answer any questions that may arise. The registration forms should be turned in to the Team Captains before the start of the Kick Off event and a copy should be kept by each participant.

TIP:

Participants should keep their registration forms so that they can track their typical fruit and vegetable consumption or physical activity over the next week and set a goal that is right for them.

Step 3:
Kick Off Event

The Kick Off event is a fun and interactive event that motivates employees to participate in *Take Action!*. The Kick Off event should give employees the opportunity to participate in healthy activities and to build team spirit, while boosting overall company

morale. You can also use this event to motivate potential participants to join a team and register for *Take Action!* Senior management, the Program Coordinator, Planning Committee members, and Team Captains should all attend the event to demonstrate the importance of employee health to the company.

TIP:

Team Captains should meet with their teams a few minutes before the start of the Kick Off event to collect completed registration forms from their team members.



ACTIVITY PHASE: 10 WEEKS

Let the fun begin! For the next 10 weeks, the role of the Program Coordinator, Planning Committee, and Team Captains is to ensure the success of participants. Be a motivator and a cheerleader for your fellow employees who are striving to make healthy choices. Plan regular activities that employees can look forward to, provide them with health information, and tips for meeting their goals.

Week 1:

- Participants start tracking their fruit and vegetable consumption or physical activity.

Weeks 2-5:

- Participants continue to track their fruit and vegetable consumption or physical activity.
- Team Captains hold weekly team huddles/bright ideas.
- Planning Committee plans and hosts bi-weekly activities to support the goals of *Take Action!*.

Week 5:

- Participants have reached the mid-point of the program. Some may have set their goals too high or too low, and this is a time for them to re-set their original goals. Team Captains assist participants in re-setting goals, as necessary with Mid-Point Goal Re-Evaluation Forms.

Weeks 6-10:

- Participants continue to track their daily fruit and vegetable consumption or physical activity.
- Planning Committee plans and hosts bi-weekly activities to support the goals of *Take Action!*.
- Planning Committee plans for the Closing Celebration.

Week 10:

- During the last weekly team huddle, Team Captains distribute the Participant Evaluation Forms to each team member.
- Team members fill out the Participant Evaluation Form and return them to their Team Captain before the end of the huddle.

EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS AND ACTIVITIES

Throughout the 10-week period, participants should receive information that helps motivate them to eat healthy foods or be physically active.

Informational Materials

These materials should include information about the benefits of fruits and vegetables and physical activity and ways to increase or maintain fruit and vegetable consumption or levels of physical activity.

TIP:

Team Captains are an effective way to distribute educational materials, but make sure that they give the information to their teams verbally as well as in a handout. Hearing health messages increases retention of information. Health organizations such as the American Heart Association, American Cancer Society, and national, state, and local government programs also have information on specific health topics.

Activities & Workshops

Workshops throughout the 10-week period are especially helpful in conveying information in a fun and interactive format. Workshops can include lectures, health screenings, cooking demonstrations, and demonstrations of various physical activities such as dancing or yoga.

Making it Fun!

It is important to make participating in *Take Action!* fun for your employees. Feedback from the first team meetings and subsequent weekly huddles can provide the Planning Committee with lots of ideas for the types of activities that employees would want

to participate in. Depending on the time of year that you are starting *Take Action!*, you may want to consider incorporating a theme into your program.

TIP:

Use your company's health plan representative or local organizations as resources for conducting workshops. Local health organizations typically have staff who can conduct educational sessions to discuss health topics such as type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and cholesterol. They will often conduct health screenings, too.

EVALUATION AND CELEBRATION

PHASE: 2 WEEKS

Evaluation is essential to the success of *Take Action!* and can help build a case for making *Take Action!* an annual activity. It also provides information for making improvements to the program. It is always important to celebrate the successes of employees. Use this program as a great excuse to have some fun and reward employees for their hard work. For more specifics about evaluating *Take Action!*, go to the Program Coordinator and Planning Committee Section of the *Take Action!* Web site.

TIP:

After implementing *Take Action!* and making other worksite wellness improvements, measuring changes in absenteeism and productivity can be used to quantify the financial benefits of the program. These savings can be the basis for building additional company resources, incentives, and funding for employee health programs.

Step 1: Program Coordinator Collects All Forms from Team Captains

- Team Captains should turn in all Evaluation Forms to the Program Coordinator within one week of the end of the program.
- Program Coordinator will use the forms to determine how many participants reached or exceeded their goals.

Step 2: Closing Celebration

- After 10 weeks of hard work, it's time to celebrate! The Closing Celebration is a time to highlight the achievements of participants and have some fun.

Step 3: Start Thinking About What's Next

- Don't let the end of *Take Action!* be the end of employee wellness activities at your worksite. Now that you have your employee's jazzed and enthusiastic about health, take it a step further. Use the tools in the [California Fit Business Kit](#) to help support employees new-found appreciation for fruits and vegetables and physical activity at work.

Frequently Cited Concerns

We don't have a budget for employee wellness.

That's ok. *Take Action!* is an entirely free program. The only costs that your business will have to cover are in-kind hours for the planning and implementation of your program and small incentives to keep your employees motivated. But remember, ignoring the problems of high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol levels, and overweight and obesity will be much more costly in the long run. It is estimated, depending on the number of health risks an employee has, that the costs alone for overweight and obesity per employee range from \$175 to just under \$2500 annually. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

If your business is in California, you may even be qualified to receive free technical assistance and incentive items from your local *Network for a Healthy California-Worksite Program*. To find out if you qualify, please visit the contact section of the *Take Action!* Web site at www.takeactionca.com.

My staff is already very busy and they don't have time to be part of this program.

We realize that you have a lot on your plate, and it can be hard to juggle all of your responsibilities,

but employee health has to become a top priority. An unhealthy workforce is an unproductive and unhappy workforce, but with small changes to improve employee health, you will start to see big differences in employees. The greatest amount of time and commitment will be placed on the Program Coordinator who will be responsible for the management of the program. However, with strong leadership from senior management, the time commitment can be distributed across staff so that the program's administration is shared with the Planning Committee and Team Captains.

My employees don't really care about healthy eating or physical activity.

In truth, they probably do, but just don't know where to start. The world of nutrition and physical activity can seem very overwhelming...but it's actually quite simple. This program will help your employees make simple lifestyle changes that will have a major impact on your company's bottom line. With rates of chronic disease steadily climbing, health must become something that everyone cares about. Company growth and profits are directly tied to the health of their employees. Human capital is the most expensive and important asset a company has...protect it by investing in health.

¹ California Department of Health Services. *California Children's Healthy Eating and Exercise Practices Survey*. <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/CPNS/Pages/CaliforniaStatewideSurveys.aspx>, 2008.

² California Department of Health Services. *California Teen Eating, Exercise, and Nutrition Survey*. <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/CPNS/Pages/CaliforniaStatewideSurveys.aspx>, 2008.

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2004.

⁴ California Department of Health Services. *The Economic Cost of Physical Inactivity, Obesity, and Overweight in California Adults: Health Care, Workers' Compensation, and Lost Productivity*. <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/CPNS/Documents/Worksite/Worksite-CostofPhysicalInactivityObesityOverweight.pdf>, 2008.

⁵ US Department of Health and Human Services (2003). *Prevention Makes Common "Cents."* Retrieved August 8, 2006 from <http://aspe.hhs.gov/health/prevention/prevention.pdf>.