

# South Dakota's Workplace Wellness Program Gets Employees Moving at Work

Nikki Prosch, MS, EP-C,  
Health & Physical Activity  
Field Specialist

## At A Glance

The South Dakota Department of Health (DOH) partnered with a coalition of statewide organizations to promote and increase access to workplace wellness programs. Employers across the state were provided trainings and resources to help set up worksite wellness policies that support healthy work environments. With support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 18 worksites made improvements that now encourage physical activity during the work day. These changes benefit more than 2,800 employees in South Dakota.



## Public Health Challenge

Working adults spend a significant amount of time at the workplace. Often, much of that time is spent physically inactive. Inactive adults have a higher risk for early death, heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, depression, and some cancers. In 2014, South Dakota had a 30% obesity rate among residents

and an additional 35% were overweight, according to Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance (BRFSS) data. Because a majority of adults spend much of their time at work, worksite wellness programs have the potential to influence health and prevent disease.

## Find Out More

For more information about South Dakota's wellness project, visit <http://www.healthysd.gov/>. This project is supported by the State Public Health Actions to Prevent and Control Diabetes, Heart Disease, Obesity, and Associated Risk Factors and Promote School Health cooperative agreement (DP13-1305).

*Once my employer gave me time during the workday to exercise and a gym I could readily access, it made a huge difference in my total exercise each day.*  
- Steps to Wellness Worksite Employee

### Contact

**Nikki Prosch, MS, EP-C,  
Health & Physical Activity  
Field Specialist**

South Dakota State University  
1910 West Kemp Avenue

Watertown, GA 57201

### Approach

DOH worked with partners to provide employers (e.g., trucking, law enforcement, insurance) across the state with educational resources and trainings on worksite wellness strategies. The health department shared two key resources with employers—CDC's Steps to Wellness: A Guide to Implementing the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans in the Workplace Toolkit and South Dakota's Model Worksite Physical Activity Policy. Both resources provide a framework for creating a worksite culture that supports health, and encourages employees to be more active during the work day. Guidance includes allowing employees time for physical activity during the work day and allowing flexible work schedules.

### Results

As of 2015, 18 worksites set up wellness policies to support worksite physical activity for employees. Improvements include built environment changes such as signage for indoor and outdoor walking paths, visually appealing healthy stairwells to encourage use during business hours, and installation of bike racks for employees to bike to and from work. Worksites also made provisions to work schedules, allowing paid time during the work day or week for physical activity. Self-reported pre- or post-survey data showed a statistically significant increase in the amount of time spent engaged in moderate aerobic physical activity (e.g., walking briskly, light cycling)—85 minutes per week pre-survey and 104 minutes post-survey. All 18 worksites received technical assistance and trainings on physical activity strategies and policies.

### What's Next

DOH will continue to identify and promote worksite physical activity for employees in South Dakota. The health department is now working with nine additional worksites to create cultures that support worksite wellness. They plan to add 20 more over the next 2 years. DOH is also collaborating with Health Management Partners, an insurance company based in South Dakota, to reach more South Dakota worksites. The aim is to build a team of trainers to enhance physical activity efforts in worksites across the state. CDC's Steps to Wellness toolkit and DOH's Model Worksite Physical Activity Policy are the basis for the trainings.