



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER EL PASO

Operating Policy and Procedure

HSCEP: 70.61 Wellness Program Policy

PURPOSE: Provide guidance on the foundation and infrastructure for Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso (TTUHSC El Paso) to establish and maintain workplace wellness initiatives. Workplace wellness initiatives focus on (a) promoting a healthy lifestyle, including exercise, healthy eating, tobacco cessation and preventive care and (b) supporting employees' social and emotional wellness, including stress management and mental health.

REVIEW: This policy will be reviewed in March each even-numbered year (ENY) by the Vice President of Human Resources with recommendations for substantial revisions forwarded to the Office of the President.

POLICY:

1. Definitions

- a. **Eligible Employee.** An eligible employee under this policy is defined as an employee who is benefit eligible, works more than 20 hours per week, and is not employed in a position where the employee is required to be a student as a condition of employment.
- b. **Employee Assistance Program (EAP).** Confidential, on-site program offering professional assessment and/or short-term counseling service to employees with personal problems that may be affecting their jobs. The program provides up to five (5) sessions with EAP counselors at no cost to the individual. Information is strictly confidential and does not become a part of the employee's personnel record.
- c. **Fitness Activities.** Any level of physical activity which requires participation in an organized session and/or use of fitness equipment at the workplace.
- d. **Health Education.** Learning opportunities designed to encourage or promote the adoption of healthy behaviors.
- e. **Healthy Lifestyle.** A lifestyle which includes activities and habits that encourages the development of physical, mental, and spiritual fitness and reduces the risk of major illness.
- f. **Health Risk Assessment (HRA).** A screening tool asking a series of questions about the employee's health, lifestyle, and health habits. To participate in the Wellness Leave program, the HRA must be completed through the Group Benefits Program website.
- g. **Physical Examination.** The physical examination should include a Complete Blood Count (CBC) and a Comprehensive Metabolic Panel (CMP) blood test. The employee must certify that the physical examination and screenings were completed by submitting the Wellness Leave Certification Form. **Screening results are considered protected health information (PHI) and shall not be disclosed or included on the form.**
- h. **Wellness Activities.** Events, campaigns, or programs specific to workplace wellness, offered or sponsored by TTUHSC El Paso as part of our wellness initiatives. A certificate of completion for each event will be required for eligibility under this policy.

- i. **Wellness Leave Program.** Eligible employees who have submitted documentation demonstrating completion of a physical examination from a healthcare provider, completion of an HRA and participation in two qualifying TTUHSC El Paso sponsored wellness events may be awarded eight (8) hours of additional leave time each fiscal year.
- j. **Wellness Get Fit Texas Program.** Texas State Agency sponsored opportunity for state employees to get active for agency-to-agency competition. By accepting the challenge, state employees take on being physically active for 150 minutes per week for at least 6 of the 10 weeks of the Challenge. Employees must register annual through [Get Fit Texas](#).
- k. **Wellness Plan.** A plan that details how an agency's wellness initiative and related wellness activities will be organized and implemented.
- l. **Workplace.** On-site location where staff conduct official TTUHSC El Paso business during their scheduled hours of employment. Includes locations not on main campus (i.e., Transmountain, Kenworthy, NE Clinic, etc.). Does not include any remote work locations.

2. Physical Activity at Work

- a. Signed liability waivers must be obtained from employees prior to participating in any physical fitness activities at TTUHSC El Paso facilities. Completed waivers should be provided to the HR Department's [Benefits & Wellness](#) offices and shall be retained in the employee's personnel files.
- b. Signs must be posted in fitness areas reminding employees that participation is at their own risk and that any unsafe conditions must be reported immediately to TTUHSC El Paso's Safety Services Department. It is advised that directions for the safe use of equipment also be posted in the area, as well as signage of where the nearest automated external defibrillator (AED), if available, is located in the building.

3. Staff Participation

- a. Employees participating in workplace wellness activities must continue to perform the essential functions of their position.
- b. Employees must complete the following tasks to be awarded eight (8) hours of wellness leave under this policy:
 - i. Receive a physical examination from a healthcare provider;
 - ii. Complete the Health Risk Assessment; and,
 - iii. Participate in two eligible wellness events and receive a certificate of completion for each event.
- c. After completing the requirements, eligible employees must complete the [Wellness Leave Certification Form](#) and required documentation and submit to [Benefits & Wellness](#) or the Human Resources office. All supporting documentation must be submitted with the certification form to meet the eligibility requirements of TTUHSC El Paso's Wellness Leave Program.
- d. Human Resources will review the documentation provided by the employee and award wellness leave hours accordingly. Wellness leave hours will be available for use on the first of the month following submission of all required documentation. Employees can view their wellness leave hours under the **Wellness Get Fit (WEF)** category.

- e. WEF hours must be scheduled in advance and with the approval of the employee's supervisor. Employees are required to submit WEF leave on their timecards or leave reports.
- f. Forfeiture of WEF Hours.
 - i. Any unused WEF hours will be forfeited at the end of the fiscal year.
 - ii. Employees who transfer from a benefit-eligible status to a non-benefit-eligible status will forfeit any unused WEF hours.
 - iii. Unused WEF hours will not be paid out upon separation of employment.
- g. Departments seeking to implement workplace wellness initiatives must receive advanced approval from the Human Resources Department. Upon approval, departments must provide equal access to wellness activities to departmental employees at all levels and across all workplaces. All employees – regardless of race, color, religion, age, sex, national origin, disability status, genetics, protected veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or any other category protected by applicable State and/or federal law – must have access to the same opportunities and supervisory support.
- h. Privacy interests of all participants must be protected in connection with all wellness initiatives and data. It is required by law to maintain the privacy and security of personally identifiable health information (PHI). PHI that is provided in connection with the wellness activities will not be provided to the employee's supervisor or manager, will not be used to make decisions regarding employment and shall only be retained in the employee's confidential medical file according to the applicable retention schedule. Information stored electronically will be encrypted.
- i. Employee health information will not be sold, exchanged, transferred, or otherwise disclosed except to the extent permitted by law to carry out specific activities related to the wellness activities. Employees will not be asked or required to waive the confidentiality of their health information as a condition of participating in the wellness activities.
- j. Employees who choose to participate in the wellness activities must not be discriminated and retaliated against because of the health information they provide as part of participating in the activities. Employees who choose not to participate must not be discriminated and retaliated against. Participation and non-participation in wellness activities will not adversely affect an employee's eligibility for advancement or any other employee right or benefit.
- k. Wellness initiatives are offered at TTUHSC El Paso's discretion and are not an employee entitlement or right.
- l. Prior to use of employee's photographs, video recordings, social media posts, written testimonials, and/or digital recordings in print and electronic communications, a signed release form must be obtained from the employees. Completed forms should be provided to the Office of Institutional Advancement.

4. Employee Workplace Wellness Structure

- a. The Human Resources Department will identify and track measurable wellness goals and objectives annually while using available resources within TTUHSC El Paso and free/discounted services from the private sector, as much as possible.
- b. Human Resources, to the extent possible, should make computers available to employees in order to facilitate health education and maximize use of online resources.

5. Program Evaluation and Data Reporting

- a. The Human Resources Department will develop a plan for routinely monitoring the quality of wellness activities. This consists of creating a monitoring and evaluation plan, collecting information on the implementation of health and wellness activities, and discussing findings with the Office of the President.
- b. Any medical information obtained from an employee as a result of their participation in a wellness activity will be kept confidential. All surveys administered that collect data on wellness activity participants may be completed anonymously.

6. Access to Healthier Options

- a. Departments are encouraged to adhere to the following nutrition guidelines when offering a meal or snack at meetings, trainings, and conferences:
 - i. Provide reduced-fat, low-sodium, and nutrient dense food options such as fruit, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat or nonfat dairy and lean protein.
 - ii. For entrees and side dishes served, offer baked, grilled, or broiled options.
 - iii. Offer reduced-fat versions of condiments (i.e., salad dressings, mayonnaise, cream cheese, sour cream, dips). Provide condiments on the side.
 - iv. Serve low or nonfat milk (1% or skim), 100% fruit juice, water, unsweetened hot or iced tea or diet soda as options.
 - v. Include a vegetarian option at all meals.
- b. Vending and Food Service – Departments are encouraged to make available healthy snacks/foods at catered events, in breakrooms, and in snack bars (where existing). Clear identification of healthy snacks is strongly encouraged.
- c. Food Storage and Preparation – Equipment to support food preparation and storage (e.g., sinks, refrigerators, microwaves, etc.) are encouraged to support employees in bringing healthy lunches and snacks to work.

7. Mental Wellbeing

- a. To promote a culture of health at the workplace, employees are encouraged to complete training related to stress management at least annually. Additionally, managers and supervisors are encouraged to complete training on empathy, communication and listening skills, and emotional intelligence at least annually.
- b. Promoting Financial Wellness. There are tools and resources available to help TTUHSC El Paso employees manage their finances and lead a happy, healthy life. Contact the [TTUHSC El Paso Benefits Office](#) for additional information.
- c. Occupational Health and Safety. Managers/supervisors may request ergonomic evaluations for employees (fees may apply) and safety/risk management trainings by contacting Safety Services.

8. Exclusions and Exceptions

- a. Participation in wellness activities is completely voluntary. There will be no ramifications for employees choosing not to participate in wellness activities. Moreover, TTUHSC El Paso is not liable for injuries sustained to employees during their participation in these non-work-related wellness and fitness activities. As a general reference, an injury that occurs before work, after work, or during non-paid time during employees' regular workday is not

compensable.

- b. External vendors not currently contracted with TTUHSC El Paso must comply with all State procurement and insurance requirements before vendor(s) can provide programs or activities at TTUHSC El Paso facilities.

9. Right to Change Policy

- a. TTUHSC El Paso reserves the right to interpret, change, modify, amend, or rescind this policy in whole or in part at any time without the consent of employees.

Attachment A: Wellness Leave Certification Form