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FAMILY WELLNESS IN THE CORPORATE SETTING

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ABSTRACT

The corporate and business setting has a great investment in the quality of life experiences of its employees especially in the area of individual wellness. One of the stabilizing influences that a corporation can provide a transferred employee is a consistent wellness program for the entire family. The values of family wellness programs are documented as well as suggestions for an effective program.

FAMILY WELLNESS IN THE CORPORATE SETTING

THE TRANSIENT CORPORATE FAMILY

As the trend continues to structure the family lifestyle around the corporate demands of the family breadwinner, the corporate setting inherits greater responsibility for the quality of life experiences for both the individual and the family. This is especially true when the family is uprooted on a rather consistent basis, moving to a new geographic location so that the breadwinner may continue to serve the corporate needs effectively. For the employee; the corporation, work responsibilities and continuous employee interaction remains constant. But for the family members, the change in location generates changes in the house, school, friendships and leisure lifestyle opportunities. One major contribution that can effectively alleviate some of the pressure of the move as well as increase the overall health and wellness of the individual and the family, is a corporate family wellness program.

FAMILY WELLNESS PROGRAM

In a recent Louis Harris poll, 92.5% of those surveyed agreed with the following statement:

If Americans lived healthier lives, ate more

nutritious food, smoked less, maintained proper weight, and exercised regularly, it would do more to improve our health than anything doctors and medicine could do for us.

Understandably, this attitude is reflected in the sales of \$30 billion a year industry of wellness related products such as running apparel, health foods and exercise equipment. The concept of family wellness is to provide programs designed specifically for the entire family unit in areas such as stress management, weight reduction, physical fitness, improved nutrition and educational awareness of leisure activities. These wellness programs can be structured in a number of different ways, such as:

STRUCTURE	PROGRAM EXAMPLES
On-site Activities	Physical fitness testing and programmed leader based fitness activities.
Workbook Programs	Instruction programmed workbook information on proper nutrition or disease prevention.
Employee Assistance Programs	Corporate wellness goals with paid incentives for family achievement of goals.
Seminar Courses	Workshops on such topics as stress management or hypertension control.
Resort-site Activities	Highly structured smoking cessation program.

VALUES OF FAMILY WELLNESS PROGRAMS

A number of organizations have effectively demonstrated that family wellness programs can have a major impact on the individual wellness of each family member. The following chart depicts the organizations and some of the values of the wellness program that the organization was able to document through controlled studies.

SEE FIGURE 1

For many organizations, a cost savings is the most dramatic value of a family wellness program. Cost savings is an indication of a reduction in health benefit payments, disability days, accident days off and sick days. The following chart indicates some of the savings in dollar value of these wellness type programs.

COMPANY	ANNUAL COST SAVINGS	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES IN PROGRAM
University of Missouri	\$ 67,996	1,002
Scoville Manufacturing	186,550	180
Illinois Bell Telephone	254,448	1,154
U.S. Postal Service	2,221,362	?
Kennecott Copper	448,400	1,200
New York Transit	2,000,000	?
E. I. Dupont	419,200	176
New York Telephone	1,565,000	300

WELLNESS PROGRAM EXAMPLES

The family wellness program can be implemented in a number of different ways. Currently there exist six different methods of program implementation. The following provides a case study example for each of the following approaches.

Case Study Method 1: Hospitals

Approximately 13 percent of the hospitals nationwide provide a specific wellness program for the corporate or industrial setting. For example, Skokie Valley (Illinois) Community Hospital provides lifestyle assessments (computerized health risk assessment, physical screening, and a behavioral assessment), health promotion workshops with topics including aerobic fitness, nutrition, weight control, stress management, smoking cessation and cancer prevention. Periodic follow ups are also included.

Case Study Method 2: Voluntary Organizations

A variety of organizations have structured their program to specifically serve the corporate family. Such groups as the American Lung Assocaton, American Cancer Society, American Heart Association and the American Red Cross provide health promotion programs at the worksite on such topics as smoking cessation, cancer prevention and detection, hypertension screening, CPR, nutrition courses, weight control, stress management, and accident prevention.

Case Study Method 3: Insurance Industry

Numerous insurance companies provide worksite wellness programs primarily through the Health Insurance Association of America (HIAA). These programs include reading material, films, and booklets to actual program implementation. The primary purpose of the insurance industry is to explain the values of the wellness program rather than actually conducting the program.

Case Study Method 4: Private Firms

Several specific corporations have implemented their own family wellness programs for their employees and families. These companies are making a major financial commitment to the employees. These are organizations that use a variety of program structures but two of the most notable are Control Data's STAYWELL Program and Johnson and Johnson's LIVE FOR LIFE program.

Case Study Method 5: The YMCA

It is unusual to single out a specific organization but the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) offers wellness programs to employees at such a large scale that the YMCA is a viable approach to family wellness. For example the YMCA has a national program for IBM in which an employee for IBM no matter where they're transferred can find the local YMCA and continue with their family in the company's wellness program.

Case Study Method 6: Wellness Consultants

Springing up over America are a number of wellness consultation firms which by contract enter into a corporation and establish the company's wellness program. These programs generally provide the standardized wellness program, however, very specific corporate tailoring is available and for many organizations this is most appropriate.

CONCLUSION

The concept of wellness is here to stay and the business world is in an excellent position to implement such a concept specifically to provide continuity to the ever-changing geographic location of its employees. Strong evidence is mounting not only for its contribution but for its necessity.

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Figure 1

Organization	Benefit of Values									
	Reduced Turn-over Rate	Improved Nutrition	Improved Weight Control	Reduced Stress	Improved Fitness	Decreased Smoking	Reduced Sick Leave	Drug Use Reduction	Reduced Accidents	Medical Interest
Johnson & Johnson	X	X	X	X	X	X				X
Control Data Systems	X	X	X	X	X					X
Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance				X		X				X
New York Telephone				X						X
Occidental Life Insurance					X		X			X
Northern Gas Co.					X					
Canada Life Assurance	X				X					
National Aeronautics Space Administration				X	X					
New York State Educational Department				X	X		X			
Kimberly Clark Co.									X	
General Motors							X		X	