



Facts on Employee Wellness

Employee wellness programs are programs aimed at **encouraging employees to take preventative measures** to control illnesses and unhealthy behavior in an attempt to manage the **burgeoning cost of health care, reduce absenteeism and improve morale**. An effective employee wellness program can result in reductions in sick leave absenteeism, employee use of health care benefits and worker's compensation claims.

Employers are encouraged to adopt wellness programs, as the Centers for Disease Control reports that *more than 75% of an employer's health care costs and productivity losses are related to employee lifestyle choices:*

- Job stress is estimated to cost American industries \$200-\$300 billion annually;
- Obesity health care costs totaled an estimated \$117 billion in 2000 and have climbed steadily;
- 95% of our nation's health expenditures is committed to diagnosing and treating disease after it becomes manifest; and
- In 2004, tobacco use was estimated to cost the United States \$193 billion, including \$97 billion in lost productivity and \$96 billion in direct health care expenditures.

According to the Department of Labor, more than half of all U.S. companies offer some type of employee wellness programming. However, while more than 6.7 million people are employed by public school systems in the U.S. – about 3.5 million teachers and 3.2 million related employees - there are **almost no employee wellness programs designed specifically for educators and school staff**. This is an alarming phenomenon given that the teaching workforce is charged with one of the nation's most critical functions – preparing children to become successful, healthy and productive citizens.