

HOW SCHOOLS ARE ALREADY ADDRESSING THE 8 DIMENSIONS OF WELLNESS

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Talent attraction and retention is a point of concern for schools and municipalities across the country. Prior to the current health and economic situation, the unemployment rate was very low, and experienced candidates are searching for the best opportunity, forcing these public institutions to compete over talent. One of the programs that we turn to for our clients to augment their hiring efforts is a wellness program – and we’re seeing an even greater need for promoting this initiative to support holistic wellbeing as we navigate the current health crisis.

However, when we present our clients with this solution it can be met with a bit of hesitation. Though school districts strive to provide great benefits for their employees, they see traditional wellness programs as a behemoth, something that may take time and resources and add to their already-strapped staff members’ plates.

But, what you may not be aware of is that you’re already making strides in the wellness department. Many of the initiatives that you’ve put in place to benefit your staff members line up directly with the eight dimensions of wellness framework that we work within for our clients.

What Are The Eight Dimensions Of Wellness?

The Eight Dimensions of Wellness were developed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) as a model that supports optimal health. The idea is that wellness does not just pertain to physical or mental wellness, but rather takes a holistic approach to a person’s lifestyle.

The Eight Dimensions of Wellness are:

- Emotional
- Spiritual
- Intellectual
- Physical
- Environmental
- Financial
- Occupational
- Social

When we analyze a school district’s population health data, we search for key drivers of healthcare costs, and seek out ways to address each of these dimensions through strategic programming. What often gets left out of the overall wellness conversation in the insurance industry, though, is that educational and government organizations are already supporting their staffs’ wellbeing in unique ways.

You Are Already Promoting Wellness – You Just Might Not Know It Yet.

School districts are often unknowingly leading the way with wellness. With talent attraction and retention in mind, many public entities have developed programming not only for physical and mental health, but for social and emotional wellbeing.

These are just a few of the ways that we see educational and government organizations promoting wellness – without calling it their wellness program.

- **Volunteering and community engagement:** Schools are the cornerstones of every community. By encouraging your staff members to volunteer their time, skills, or funds to local causes, or simply participate in a community event, you're highlighting the social dimension of wellness.
- **Mindfulness and inclusivity:** Public entities are effectively promoting mindfulness exercises in their workplace, hosting mental health trainings, and encouraging employees to try meditation apps or take meaningful breaks from their work. In addition, schools are focused on creating a safe, inclusive space for employees and students.
- **Continuing education:** You may require or incentivize your employees to work toward CE hours – but did you know you can promote this as part of your wellness program? Intellectual and occupational wellness are factors in a holistic wellness approach, and encouraging flexible professional development is a key way to keep your employees engaged.
- **Collaboration and peer recognition:** Social wellness is further encouraged in schools through a focus on collaboration between teams, and the use of peer recognition.
- **Offering worksite benefits:** Compensation packages that include benefits like short term disability, identity theft protection, student loan repayment programs, and even pet insurance promote many aspects of wellness from physical wellness to financial wellness.
- **Onsite workout facilities and classes:** The public facilities that our clients work out of often have an onsite gym, and even hosted classes for employees. This isn't the norm in many industries, and schools are uniquely positioned to support employee wellness by utilizing these facilities.
- **Healthy food options:** During lunch meetings or onsite seminars, school systems prioritize healthy meal options for their employees, or affordable access to the same healthy lunches that students eat on a daily basis.

These initiatives are often present, yet sometimes overlooked, in the majority of school districts that we encounter. They're a part of the culture, an integral aspect of a high-functioning school district or government entity.

While wellness needs to be addressed holistically, it is certainly not one-size fits all. We are able to take our knowledge of public sector organizations and enhance these efforts by developing a wellness program that addresses the specific needs of the employee population.

Our in-house risk management team uses proprietary data analytics tools and reports to identify areas for improvement, address socioeconomic factors that may impact your specific population, and provide a clear, concise strategy for your school district. Then, we can make educated vendor and programming recommendations and assist with the execution of your unique wellness program.

Implementing a wellness program shouldn't have to mean relying on your staff to carry the water for yet another initiative. **Reach out to your insurance partner for more information on developing a customized wellness strategy, and ask about how data analytics can provide solutions that enhance what you're already offering to your staff.**