

# Recommendations: FOSTERING A HEALTHY WORKPLACE

Below is some core guidance for a healthy workplace. Remember the goal is to achieve improvements in long-term health.

- 1 Create a culture of health:** People must feel supported in their health journey. Recognize the impact of stress on obesity and adopt written and unwritten policies that explicitly encourage employees to prioritize health throughout the working day.
- 2 Implement policies that tackle stigma:** Review HR policies to check for biases at all stages. Pay special attention to your biases during interviews, promotion considerations, penalizations, wage offers, position assignments, and in your general language use.
- 3 Pair prevention with treatment:** The workplace should be an environment that encourages healthy habits including healthy eating and living an active lifestyle. However, it is important to ensure treatment options and policies are in place to support employees living with obesity. The roots of obesity are complex and varied, and comprehensive obesity care should cover behavioral counseling, anti-obesity medications or bariatric surgery, depending on needs.
- 4 Listen to your employees:** No single approach will work for all employees. It depends on organizational size and structure, employee demographics, business operations and company resources. Studies have shown that 'generic' employee wellness programmes rarely work. The first step towards building a tailored approach towards employee health is to begin by surveying your workforce and finding out what support they really need.

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**Be wary of 'fad' initiatives:** 'Tick box' health initiatives often place responsibility on employees to 'fix' themselves, when the reality is obesity requires integrated, long-term approaches. Nutritional and exercise goals can contribute to an overall healthy lifestyle, but be sure to acknowledge the wider roots of obesity when implementing health initiatives. Remember that some employees living with obesity may not be able to take part in certain activities and programmes. Effective employee health policies are about creating a lasting culture of support and inclusivity.

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**Strong and visible leadership:** Support is needed at all levels of the organization. Programs are more successful when there is participation and buy-in from management and leadership.

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**Communicate effectively and through multiple channels:** Be clear about your company mission and the practical support on offer. Communicate with employees through a variety of means (emails, posters, announcements at meetings etc)

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**Monitor Progress:** Continue to recognize where your organization is succeeding and where improvement is needed. Any improvement is good so be realistic with your expectations and your tracking. Identify which areas need modification.

