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THE WORKPLACE: Increasing Physical Activity

OUR POSITION

ACE seeks public and organizational policies that support easy, affordable access to physical activity in and around the workplace.

CALL TO ACTION

ACE urges organizations and government officials to advance policies that increase opportunities to engage in physical activity in and around the workplace—policies that are comprehensive, supported by well-qualified professionals and rooted in behavior-change science. Specifically, ACE calls for organizational and public policies that:

- + Incentivize and/or encourage employers to put in place programs and policies that enable and motivate people to stay moving both on and off the job.
- + Incentivize and/or encourage building and workspace planners to consider a workforce's physical-activity needs in the design of work spaces and structures.
- + Invest in initiatives that help transform the built environment—and create safe, reliable and affordable opportunities to engage in physical activity while commuting.
- + Create paid time/flex-time for physical activity during the workday.
- + Make the property owned or leased by employers available for participation in physical-activity programs by employees and others, as appropriate, and incentivize its use for that purpose.

WHY

Studies show that interventions more effectively prevent and manage chronic disease and obesity when implemented where people spend significant portions of their time. Most American adults spend 40-plus hours per week at work, so the work environment is a fertile ground for creating opportunities to engage in physical activity. Employers should institute and invest in policies that encourage regular physical activity among their employees—and there is a business upside to

doing so. Physically active and healthy employees tend to have lower absenteeism, enhanced levels of engagement, higher productivity, greater levels of job satisfaction and less incidence of chronic diseases, while less healthy employees raise employer healthcare and insurance costs. The investment can be tailored to the resources and size of a company and does not always need to be a formal program or training. Increasing opportunities to be active in the workplace can be as simple as instituting a walking-meeting policy or giving employees standing work stations. Or it can be as extensive as developing strategic partnerships in the community (transportation departments, city officials, etc.) to help create environments that are conducive to being physically active.

To deliver a meaningful return on investment, employee physical-activity programs must support and guide employees, allowing them to feel the freedom to participate. Offering and encouraging participation in opportunities that are facilitated by professionals who are well trained in weight management, physical activity and overall behavior modification can have a significant, positive effect on employers' bottom lines.

Increasing physical activity around the workplace is also needed. It is equally important that our cities, states and the federal government place a focus on the built environment, including active transportation and safe routes for pedestrians and bicyclists.

RESEARCH

1. Byrne, D. et al. 2016. Modifiable Healthy Lifestyle Behaviors: 10-Year Health Outcomes From a Health Promotion Program. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. Volume 51, Issue 6, Pages 1027 – 1037.
2. Mattke, Soeren, Harry H. Liu, John P. Caloyeras, Christina Y. Huang, Kristin R. Van Busum, Dmitry Khodyakov, and Victoria Shier. 2013. *Workplace Wellness Programs Study: Final Report*. RAND Corporation.