



Best Practices Developing Your Worksite Policy to Support Physical Activity

This document provides a model for developing policy statements to support physical activity at your workplace. These examples are adapted from policies implemented by organizations using WorkHealthy America. Annotations explain the importance of including the key components of a physical activity policy, and provide suggestions for tailoring the policies to meet the needs of your worksite. Additional policy templates can be found in the WorkHealthy America toolbox.

Drafting a Physical Activity Policy: Getting Started

Start by taking a look at your existing worksite policies. Some organizations choose to create a separate, new policy specifically for physical activity, but you can also integrate physical activity guidelines into existing policies or documents about safety and liability, wellness, and work and/or flex-time. For example, language about physical activity waivers of liability could be included in new employee manuals; information about access to workout facilities could be included in a policy statement describing all employee wellness-related benefits; or existing policies about flex-time could be adapted to include physical activity.

As you draft your policies, remember to ensure that opportunities for physical activity are available to all employee groups. For example, if applicable, policies should address access for both shift workers and administrative personnel.

Your policy can also be a guide for promoting the core principles of a physically active work environment:

- **Policy:** *Adopt and implement leadership and policy infrastructure supportive of physical activity.*
- **Environment:** *Create a work environment conducive to physical activity.*
- **Benefits and Incentives:** *Use benefit design and incentives to encourage employees to be active at work and communicate widely to staff about those benefits and incentives.*

What Should Your Physical Activity Policy Cover?

Whether your policy is new or a modified version of a pre-existing policy, it should cover the following key components:

- **Paid Time for Physical Activity**
- **Flexible Work Hours**
- **Access to Facilities**
- **Safety and Liability**
- **Standing and/or Movement Breaks**



Sample Physical Activity Policy Language

The following examples from other WorkHealthy America organizations include language that incorporates the key components listed above.

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The leadership at [ORGANIZATION] supports a culture of employee wellness and safety across the organization. Our mission is to provide opportunities for physical activity that are accessible for all employees. Employees are encouraged to pursue wellness programs and healthy activities during paid breaks and other approved working hours, provided such absences do not conflict with individual work responsibilities, departmental operations, and/or patient/service delivery.

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**FRAMING:
SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT**
This introductory language expresses the value of supporting physical activity at your worksite.

Paid Time for Physical Activity

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Each full-time employee is permitted two 15-minute physical activity breaks each work day. [ORGANIZATION] encourages employees to use these breaks to engage in physical activity each time a break is observed. As with all breaks, they should only be taken at a time when acceptable coverage is available and work load permits. The employee is allowed to use this break time for physical wellness and may utilize the identified walking paths, the on-site gym (if a member) or alternate physical activity such as chair or desk exercises. The 15-minute breaks are not to be used in conjunction with the meal break. If the employee leaves the grounds, the employee must punch in and out for their break. Breaks are not intended to be taken within an hour of the end of the shift. **Employees may also choose to attend any available on-site wellness education classes in lieu of engaging in physical activity.**

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SHIFT WORK
For hospitals or businesses with employees who work in shifts, this language permits employees to participate in physical activity during paid work time without interfering with patient or client support. Ideally, the total time allotted for physical activity would be 30 minutes.

Allow opportunities for employees to attend wellness events during the workday, with supervisor approval.



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All employees, interns, and contractors are able to use 30 minutes of their regularly scheduled working hours to participate in physical activity. For paid staff and contractors, this is considered regular work time. For volunteer interns, this time contributes to the total internship hours. All employees and interns must complete a waiver of liability to participate in physical activity during the workday as part of their orientation.

The thirty minutes may be used within the office (e.g. use of the treadmill, exercise videos, on-site classes, stretching), outdoors (e.g. walking, running or cycling on neighboring streets), or off-site (e.g. pool, local gym). Transportation to off-site facilities should not be included within the 30 minute physical activity benefit; flex time policies can be used to accommodate such activities.

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DESK/ADMINISTRATIVE WORK
For businesses that have full-time administrative/desk positions, this language permits employees to participate in physical activity as a part of paid work time.

Define the amount of time, ideally 30 minutes, employees have available to engage in physical activity during the workday.

Flexible Work Hours

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[ORGANIZATION] allows employees to be flexible with their schedules in order to be physically active, as their workload permits. **Employees can adjust their start and end times to allow exercise during the workday.** Flex time can be used to allow employees to exercise at the beginning or end of the work (shifting their full work day earlier or later) or to participate in more than 30 minutes of physical activity during the workday, by combining their lunch and activity breaks for an extended physical activity (and therefore, shift their work hours accordingly).

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DESK/ADMINISTRATIVE WORK
Flex time policies permit employees to take a longer fitness break during the workday if they arrive at work earlier or leave later to cover missed work time. Existing flex time policy can be amended to include physical activity.



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[ORGANIZATION] allows employees **flexibility in schedule for physical wellness activity when adequate, arranged coverage is available and work load permits.**

Employees will not be required to clock out for physical activity that takes place on the premises; this will be considered time worked. However, the following procedure must be followed when an employee chooses to engage in physical activity during their break time to ensure maximum productivity in all work areas:

1. **Employees will need to sign a log** indicating the time when leaving their designated work area to engage in physical activity.
2. Upon returning to the work area, the employee will need to sign the log indicating the time they are returning to their work area.

[MANAGER] will be responsible for collecting the logs for statistical reporting purposes.

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Access to Facilities

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Acceptable examples of physical activity at work include but are not limited to:

- Walks on trails or sidewalks around the [ORGANIZATION] building
- Climbing stairs or walking hallways within [ORGANIZATION] building
- Participation in on-site fitness classes
- Walking meetings on trails or sidewalks around the premises or through the parking lot
- Use of videos and exercise bands in the wellness room or other unoccupied rooms

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SHIFT WORK

For hospitals or businesses with employees who work in shifts, this language provides opportunities for employees to use flexible work hours to schedule physical activity according to their preferences.

A log can help you track employee use of physical activity benefits.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Clearly outlining how employees can engage in physical activity can empower them to take advantage of paid and flex time as intended.



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Fitness facilities: Conditions of Use

Membership to the on-site fitness room is free for all employees. Employees can use their badge to access the fitness room 24/7 for physical activity during breaks as well as before and/or after shifts.

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FITNESS FACILITIES

If your organization has an on-site fitness facility, clearly identify any necessary fees and describe how and when employees can access the facility.

Safety and Liability

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To utilize opportunities for physical wellness during work hours, all employees will need to sign a **Waiver and Release of Liability form** and submit it to the Employee Wellness office to be maintained in the employee’s file as part of the hiring and orientation process. Employees not completing this form will be considered out of compliance with this policy.

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A release form can inform employees about the risks associated with physical activity and reduce liability concerns. Consider integrating these waivers into hiring or orientation processes to ensure they are completed prior to engaging in physical activity.

Standing and/or Movement Breaks

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Employees are encouraged to take **standing and/or movement breaks during extended periods of sitting** during meetings or while working at their desks. Employees may use their physical activity time to take 15 minute walking breaks during the day. **Active stretch breaks will be built into meetings lasting over an hour.** Employees may participate in walking meetings on company property or designated walking trails.

Conducting walking meetings among staff is strongly encouraged. From the front doors of the [ORGANIZATION] building, three times around the trail circling the parking lot is one mile.

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This language encourages employees to reduce sedentary behavior. Key strategies for reducing sedentary time include regular 15-minute breaks, active stretch breaks for meetings lasting above a designated time, and walking meetings.