



Charlie Crist
Governor

Ana M. Viamonte-Ros, M.D., M.P.H.
State Surgeon General

PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jeannine Mallory, Public Information Officer
Pinellas County Health Department
727-824-6908 (media only)

Pinellas County Health Department Receives American Heart Association National Award for Employee Wellness Program

The Pinellas County Health Department was recently recognized by the American Heart Association as a **Start! Fit Friendly** company and received the Gold Award for its employee wellness program.

Gold-Level recognition is awarded to organizations that meet strict criteria, including increasing healthy eating options at work, offering employees physical activity support, promoting a culture of wellness and implementing at least six activities in the area of physical activity, two activities in the area of nutrition and one in the area of organizational culture. The Pinellas County Health Department qualified for Gold-Level recognition in the following areas:

Physical Activity

- Actively motivates employees through walking programs, online newsletters, information pamphlets and pedometer/tracking booklets.
- Encourages employees to take stretch breaks or participate in other physical activities during meetings.
- Provides clean, safe, well-lit attractive stairwells accessible to employees during working hours and actively promotes their use with point-of-decision reminders and signage.
- Offers employees a minimum of 12 "Sneakers/Workout Attire" days a year.
- Offers and promotes various physical activity classes (e.g. aerobics, yoga).

Nutrition

- Provides healthy eating information to employees through a dedicated website, newsletter, email reminders and point-of-service materials.
- Requires on-site vending machines to offer a minimum of 25% "healthy" food and beverage options.

Culture

- President or company CEO appoints an internal wellness program coordinator or wellness promotion staff member to be available to employees for consultation.
- Offers employees annual health risk assessments and provides feedback to employees.
- Organizes and promotes employee health programs, services or classes.
- Identifies procedures and develops activation plans to handle employee at-work health emergencies.
- Offers training in CPR, first aid, and/or the use of an automated external defibrillator.

Adult Americans spend most of their waking hours at work and many are in sedentary careers. They are increasingly susceptible to health risks associated with inactive lifestyles. Studies suggest that by implementing a worksite physical activity program and promoting a culture of activity, employers can: increase productivity, reduce absenteeism, lower turnover and reduce healthcare costs. Besides benefiting companies, a healthier workplace helps employees live healthier, longer lives.

For information about starting a worksite wellness program, call 727-820-4113.

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