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# Developing and Sustaining Workplace Wellness in a School Division

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## Where to start

### Developing a structure for school division workplace wellness

#### What does it look like?

You've likely had a structure, strategy, and plan to encourage student health and well-being for many years now. But what about employee well-being? Like student wellness, workplace wellness benefits from a structure and formal strategy. This guide provides examples and outlines some of the work to help you get started. Other great resources for high-level planning include the [CASS Workplace Wellness: A Planning and Implementation Guide](#) and the [CASS Workplace Wellness Playbook](#).

It all starts at the top. Supportive leaders set the stage for a strong focus on wellness. After gaining leadership buy-in, you can start putting a plan into place. To set clear goals and defined roles, consider the information below and what will work best for employees in your school division.

The structure of your workplace wellness initiative will depend on several factors including the geographic size of your school division, the number of schools and worksites, and the interests and diversity of your employees. In cases of medium or large school authorities, you might have multiple groups, or a network of committees, to ensure that work is spread evenly, and all employee groups are represented. For very small school authorities, one group might be enough.

The following groups and committees are examples of how you may choose to structure and sustain workplace wellness in your school division:

- **Steering committee:** Providing overall guidance, the steering committee develops the terms of reference, sets the direction for broad wellness initiatives, and supports the work carried out by wellness champions.
- **Wellness champion group:** Consisting of members from various employee groups, schools, and worksites, including representation from the steering committee, the wellness committee acts on behalf of employees to plan, implement and help evaluate wellness initiatives. Members of this group are often referred to as health champions or wellness champions.
- **Staff wellness working groups:** These smaller groups work alongside wellness champions at their schools and worksites to carry out various actions and projects, identified at the working group level or steering committee. These groups, comprised of volunteers, are especially helpful in schools and worksites with numerous employees.

### Is everyone on the same page with vision and logistics?

*Why workplace wellness should be a focus in your school or jurisdiction*

Answers may seem obvious; however, each member of your team may have different ideas. Knowing your underlying reasons will help in building a collective “why,” which in turn can unify your team and ensure all members are striving toward the same vision.

Discuss and agree upon the reasoning behind creating a workplace wellness strategy. You could also think about how division and school leadership support is crucial to success, how to communicate with and involve these leaders, while also engaging them to help highlight health and wellness supports to employees.

### What is the vision?

If you’re looking to cultivate happy, healthy, resilient employees who make great choices and are exemplary role models for their students and colleagues, consider developing a shared vision of what the steering committee or leadership team hope to achieve. You might want to think about:

- What does a healthy school jurisdiction look like to you?
- What are the goals and objectives you hope to achieve?
- What are the barriers to consider?
- What is the group’s purpose?

For example, the vision might include any number of goals:

- Improving the quality of relationships among and between staff.
- Creating physical environments that make it easier to eat well or be physically active.
- Providing staff with opportunities to learn and develop skills that improve staff wellness.

Most importantly, the vision should be developed collaboratively by committee members.

## Logistics

### Where and when will meetings be held?

You may want to consider:

- Whether jurisdiction-wide or school-site-specific, where will committee members meet?
- Are virtual meetings an option?
- Will you meet before, after, or during school hours?
- Is funding available to cover substitute teacher costs for steering committee members?
- What about for the wellness champion meetings?
- Are there opportunities to meet on Professional Development days, even for a few hours?

Create a schedule of regular meetings for each committee. Some groups may need to meet more than others. For example, the steering committee may have more meetings in the beginning and then every few

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months after the group is up-and-running. It might be helpful to schedule steering committee meetings before champion group meetings, to help set priorities and guide their work.

### What is the timeline?

What is the timeline for initiatives and the yearly cycle? Map out your vision for the school year to see the big picture and if it aligns with your school division's strategic goals and objectives.

### Consider the how

Careful planning and attention to detail are essential for achieving success. It is important to develop a plan that considers all strategies or actions required, the resources and roles needed to support the work, and a plan for how to measure your efforts. The next sections of this guide will expand more on the *how*, but in the meantime consider these questions:

- How do you envision engaging school leaders and other managers? How can you support them as well, so it is not substantially impacting their workload?
- How will you fund this work? Are there creative ways to reallocate funds or are there grants you can apply for?
- How will you measure progress?
- Will schools work together to roll out program activities or work independently on these details?
- How will you communicate and promote wellness initiatives to staff?

### Building a wellness steering committee

The steering committee sets the stage by developing a terms of reference, vision, strategy and plan, then puts it into action. If your group currently has a program or committee in place for student health, consider how to leverage their work or seek opportunities to strategize together. There are most likely activities that can be designed to benefit both employees and students.

#### Step one: recruitment

Find the right people. Identify interested individuals with a passion for health, and who are:

- interested in planning, running, and evaluating events and initiatives.
- committed to setting an example of great health and encouraging it in others.
- eager to get involved and understand the roles and responsibilities.

#### Wellness champions

Ideally, each school will have a wellness champion. In smaller jurisdictions, you might only have one wellness champion group. In large (usually urban) jurisdictions, you can divide your school division into geographic areas and nominate one or two wellness champions to represent the group's collective ideas and interests on the larger steering committee. Or you might consider a different cascading structure to ensure two-way dialogue and communication. Your program is more likely to be successful if you engage all stakeholders. To get started, begin with those who are most interested and then consider a plan on how to best engage others.

#### Step two: choose wellness steering committee members

Determine a process for appointing members to roles. Roles on the committee should depend on the size and scope of your wellness initiative. The following is a list of committee roles you may want to consider, but are not limited to:

- Chair
- Co-Chairs
- Secretary
- Communications

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- Teacher representative
  - School administrator representative
  - Support staff representative
  - Occupational Health and Safety representative
  - School wellness champions or area representatives
  - External partner representatives

Next steps include developing a plan to:

- Invite external group facilitators if this would be beneficial. ASEBP offers this at no cost.
- Consider hosting guest speakers for some meetings.
- Develop committee meeting norms and etiquette.
- Confirm meeting dates and locations.
- Prepare a meeting minutes template.
- Create a communications outline and measurables to check-back with stakeholders.

### Step three: communication

A key to sustaining a staff wellness initiative is your leadership team's commitment to achieving their vision and goals for employee health and well-being.

Focus on communicating ideas, thoughts, feedback, interest, and changes throughout the process. Share the vision or philosophy, and support for why a wellness committee is being developed. One helpful place to start is by communicating how positive employee health can complement student learning and health.

### Step four: structure, expectations, and roles

Develop a clear outline of structure, expectations, and roles.

1. Work with committee members to outline a clear idea of commitment and responsibilities.
  - Committee roles
  - Expectations
  - Meeting agendas (outlines)
2. Provide the committee with ownership and freedom to develop ideas and action plans specific to employee goals and interests.
  - Prepare an employee interest and willingness survey, or another type of survey, to gain baseline information.
  - It might be helpful to review the [CASS Workplace Wellness Guide and Playbook](#).
3. Check for consistency in structure and communication at every level. Develop a communications plan for each committee, between committees and with employees. Here are a few questions to build your plan:
  - How will you communicate with each of your audiences (email, phone, newsletter, poster, staff meeting or announcement)?
    - How can we share information with employees?
    - How can employees share their ideas and thoughts with the committee?
    - Who will initiate communication?
    - When will you communicate (weekly, monthly, before meetings, after meetings, for events)?

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- Where will meeting minutes and other committee documents be kept? Who will have access?

**Step five: book the first meetings and begin to build the terms of reference together**

See next page for a terms of reference overview and example.

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## Terms of Reference Example

A terms of reference is a guiding document to help clarify and sustain the work of a committee. The following is an example for a health and wellness steering committee, followed by an example of a wellness champion role description.

### Steering committee

#### Mandate and guiding principles

The steering committee oversees the wellness plan and ensures high-level goals are met. This includes:

- Identifying the initiatives and strategies needed to achieve the strategic goals.
- Providing high-level direction and planning for wellness champions.
- Identifying and monitoring indicators of progress.
- Communicating and promoting health and wellness initiatives with internal and external stakeholders of the school division, as needed.
- Discussing helpful trends, opportunities, and issues regarding health and wellness for the school division.
- Encouraging a commitment among all stakeholders to collaborative learning and working.

#### Wellness initiatives will be:

- Transformational and innovative work, requiring a long-term view and commitment to well-being.
- Transparent and inclusive of all employees' needs.
- Strongly linked to the strategic priorities of the school division.
- Recognize a holistic definition of health and wellness.
- Be tied to quality research and evaluated in a preferably non-intrusive yet timely manner.

#### Frequency of meetings

The steering committee will meet a minimum of four times per school year as a full group, with dates and times shared in advance and at the beginning of the school year.

### Membership

Representatives from the groups below make up the committee and ensures that representation from all employee groups is present:

- Division health and wellness lead (if applicable)
- School division leadership
- School administrators
- Teachers
- Educational assistants and other support staff
- Division psychologist(s) and family school liaison workers
- Maintenance staff
- Representatives from ASEBP and Alberta Health Services (if applicable)
- Other ad hoc members

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## Committee role descriptions

| Role  | Description   |
|---|---|
| Chair(s)  | Creates the agenda and facilitates meetings. Main contact for the committee.  |
| Secretary   | Records meeting minutes, sends communications between committee members and committees.   |
| Employee type representative                      | One or two representatives from various employee groups such as school administrators, teachers, educational assistants, division psychologist(s) or family school liaison workers, and support staff.  |
| School Wellness Champions or Area Representatives | Two or three wellness champions, involved in brainstorming, planning, and implementing wellness initiatives.  |
| ASEBP Workplace Wellness Consultant               | Represents ASEBP, shares resources for staff health and wellness from ASEBP, and discusses trends from other school authorities. May also help the chair with planning of various actions and strategies.   |
| Alberta Health Services representative            | A member from the AHS School Health Promotion team, Community Services team, or other relevant AHS team. Responsibility for sharing information about resources, services, and other insights as appropriate. Might also help the chair with planning, depending on scope of the AHS team involved. |

## Communication

The committee will regularly and transparently communicate activities to school division stakeholders and gather feedback in the same manner. These include:

- Wellness champion or division newsletters
- The school division's staff health and wellness website page(s)
- Staff health and wellness team drive
- Staff surveys
- Updates to school division employees and stakeholders

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## Role description example: wellness champion

### Be part of making health happen!

|                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Role description</b>          | <p>The wellness champion group was established as a voluntary group in 2018 to promote health and wellness at work. They play an important role in supporting health and wellness at their school or worksite.</p> <p>The group promotes and encourages awareness and activities that support wellness. They might also form a small working group at their school to assist, especially if the school has many staff.</p>   |
| <b>Role and responsibilities</b> | <p>You will take a lead role in promoting and encouraging a focus on health and wellness at your school or worksite. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gathering ideas from your colleagues about activities that maximize the involvement of many people.</li><li>• Promoting, leading and/or coordinating activities.</li><li>• Being a champion at your site by displaying enthusiasm and inspiring others to get involved.</li><li>• Identifying potential barriers to participation (school or division wellness plans).</li><li>• Ensuring that posters and resources are available for staff to access in the staff and/or department rooms, to support their own health and wellness.</li><li>• Encouraging participation in the evaluation of the division's efforts to improve health and wellness (as needed).</li><li>• Organizing a small group at your school or worksite to help with the planning, promotion, and actioning of health and wellness initiatives (as needed).</li></ul> |
| <b>Commitment</b>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meet three times a year with the rest of the wellness champions to learn, share ideas, and speak with the health and wellness steering committee.</li><li>• Provide a full school year's commitment to participating as a wellness champion for your school division.</li></ul>  |