



Update on HB 1297 Creation of State Employee Wellness Program

HB 1297 by Representative Delisi requires the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) to:

Designate a “statewide wellness coordinator”

- DSHS has set aside funding for this new position
- Classified as a Program Specialist VI, it was posted on December 21, 2007
- Closing date is January 24, 2008

Adopt rules

- Proposed rules were published for 30 days in December 2007. DSHS did not receive any comments.
- These rules:
 - Repeal current state agency worksite wellness rules
 - Describe only the administration of the Worksite Wellness Advisory Board created by HB 1297
- Rules should be finalized no later than April 2008
- According to the DSHS General Counsel, the advisory board can meet before the rules are final.

Support the Worksite Wellness Advisory Board

- Purpose of this board is to advise DSHS on:
 - Funding and resource development for state agency worksite wellness programs
 - Identification of food service vendors that sell healthy foods
 - Best practices in the private sector
 - Worksite wellness features and architecture for new state buildings
- DSHS solicited nominations in October, reviewed the applications and is now in the process of sending recommendations to Executive Commissioner Hawkins for approval.
- DSHS will announce the list of board members upon final approval and notification to the nominees.

Develop a model worksite wellness program

- The model program will be based on activities that are evidence-based (i.e., proven effective). However, the model will need to be as creative as possible in meeting the needs of state employees who work in a variety of non-traditional settings throughout the state, so new and innovative activities should be developed and evaluated.
- Once the coordinator has been hired:

- A multi-agency planning team will be convened to set priorities and develop the “model program.” This team will consist of staff from:
 - DSHS – including programs with expertise in health promotion and wellness – obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular, mental health & substance abuse, etc.
 - Other state agencies – DSHS has had discussions with the Comptroller’s Office who has volunteered to be a pilot site
- DSHS will be sending a letter to each state agency head asking them to identify their worksite wellness liaison, as they are required to designate under HB 1297.

Other DSHS Worksite Wellness Initiatives

Building Healthy Texans (DSHS worksite wellness program)

- In 2006, DSHS initiated an internal pilot comprised of two components:
 - Encouraging employees to receive annual physical exams, which often include preventive screenings. A large number of employees received check-ups during the designated time of the pilot. As a result, several employees discovered they had serious health conditions that might not have otherwise been detected on an early basis.
 - Offering healthy menu options at the on-site cafeteria of the DSHS headquarters in Austin. This effort seemed to be successful during the limited time in which it was offered, in that many employees selected the healthier options and the cafeteria did not lose revenue. However, cafeteria management changed and discontinued the pilot.
- In 2007, DSHS initiated a new pilot program called “Farm to Work,” where an area farmer delivers fresh produce to employees at two DSHS sites each Thursday afternoon.
 - The purpose of this pilot is increase consumption of fruits and vegetables by making it easily accessible to employees.
 - Employees order and pay for the produce ahead of time online.
 - This pilot is being evaluated, but so far it has been well received and very successful.
- The DSHS worksite wellness coordinator position is currently vacant, but the position has been posted. DSHS is actively recruiting applicants with expertise in health promotion programs. This person will work as a team with the statewide wellness coordinator established under HB 1297.
- As resources allow, DSHS will continue to pursue internal pilot initiatives, will work with the HHS enterprise to develop system policies for wellness, and pursue other activities as required by HB 1297.