

Section I: Creating a Wellness Group

GETTING STARTED

What is a Wellness group (WG)?

A WG is a group of co-workers coming together to improve the health and work life of their team, unit, department, facility or shared service area. The WG can act as the eyes, ears, voice and hands for workplace health.

Why create a Wellness group?

Capital Health supports a workplace where people are happy, healthy, safe, and want to come to work. The Capital Health "Healthy Workplace" policy can be found in Appendix A.

A WG enables co-workers to come together to share ideas (formally or informally); to improve the health and work-life of their team, unit, department or facility; share in the workload, and promote continuity of the workplace wellness activities.

The responsibilities of the WG can range from being an advisory group to one that is more action oriented. Typical functions of the group might include the following¹:

1. Assessing

It is critical to assess for health promotion needs. (See section 3 for ideas)

2. Planning

- a) Brainstorming health promotion ideas
- b) Prioritizing and selecting options
- c) Getting a clear idea about:
 - Who will be responsible for a specific activity? Should a sub group be formed?
 - When will the health promotion activity be scheduled?
 - How much time is needed to plan and what should the timelines be?
 - What facilities and resources are needed?
 - Do any resources or materials need to be developed? If so, who will do it?
 - What kind of budget is needed and where will the money come from? (See Section 3 for funding ideas)

3. Promoting

All successful health activities are well promoted. The greatest influence on getting people to participate is through "word of mouth" from other employees, in this case the WG. (See Section 3 for ideas on how to put your plan into action)

4. Implementing

Once the WG has developed a plan, it needs to be rolled out into action – this might include locating a speaker, reserving a room, registering employees, overseeing the event, cleaning up once it is over and evaluating to determine what worked, what didn't work and what might be done differently with the next "event".

5. Evaluating

Getting feedback on what is being done can help the WG make recommendations for future activities and improve approaches. See Section 3 for information on how to see if your plan is working.

What might a WG do?

Put health and wellness activities into action such as a Walking Club, Cross Canada Challenge celebration of special occasions, education series, or a staff recognition program, like the Random Acts of Kindness.

Write a Workplace Health Promotion Grants proposal.

Implement and evaluate workplace health promotion or projects.

Encourage team to participate in team-building or morale-building activities.

Offer opportunities to socialize with co-workers.

GETTING ORGANIZED

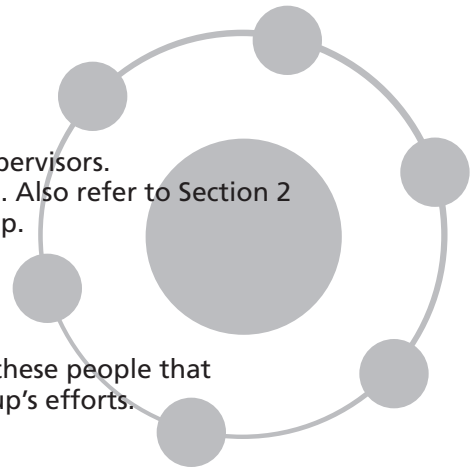
How to create a WG.

STEP 1: GET SUPPORT

A successful group will need support from management and/or supervisors. A sample letter for request of support can be found in Appendix B. Also refer to Section 2 for more information on how management can support your group.

STEP 2: FORM THE GROUP¹

Pulling together the “right” people to be on the WG is important. The best group members are those who volunteer their time. It is these people that tend to believe in the program and want to contribute to the group’s efforts.



To book rooms that are not available through Central Room Booking, please see the contact information below:

- Abbie J Lane Gymnasium
Andrew Ritcey 473-4221
- Cobequid Community Health Centre
Switchboard 869-6100
- Dartmouth General Hospital
Virginia Nisbett 465-8468
- East Coast Forensics Hospital
Front desk 460-7300
- Eastern Shore Memorial Hospital
Wendie Russell 885-3600
- Hants Community Hospital
Marie Allen 792-2110
- Musquodoboit Valley Memorial Hospital
Eva Deal 384-2220
- Public Health Services
Switchboard 481-5800
- Twin Oaks
Front desk (afternoons only)
889-4110 or
Mary Ellen MacIsaac
889-4143
- Weather Watch Cafeteria
Catering 473-6841

Who needs to be involved?

When recruiting members think about both their attitude and skills. Consider the following qualities when recruiting people for your WG:

- Personal interest in health and wellness (members don’t have to be the perfect specimen of health – just interested)
- Some knowledge of wellness issues
- Respected by other staff
- Dependable
- Good communication and interpersonal skills
- Enthusiastic and energetic

The number of people chosen for the WG will depend on what the group hopes to achieve. It is important to remember that if a group gets too large, it may be harder to schedule meetings.

Keep membership to a maximum of 10-12 people.

Where and when?

Some groups decide to meet once/month, taking July and August off – and will meet more often if a specific activity or project requires it. It is best to decide how often you plan on meeting and book meeting rooms right away.

See Central Room Booking at:

<http://cdhaintra/departmentservices/audiovisual/avCrbRooms/avCrbRoomListing.html>

STEP 3: MAKE IT YOUR OWN AND DEFINE A COMMON PURPOSE

First of all, make this WG your own by choosing a name. Some groups find it useful to develop a Terms of Reference to direct the purpose of the group. A Terms of Reference is a guiding document that states details of what the wellness group will do.

If you don't think your group needs a Term of Reference, it is good to consider the following questions² and document your responses so that you have something to look back on:

1. What is the purpose of the WG?
2. What does the WG hope to achieve?
3. Where is the group now and what needs to be considered in planning for the future?
4. How are you going to get where you want to be?
5. What are you going to do and when?
6. How will you know if you have succeeded or at last on the right track?
7. How often are you going to meet?
8. Who will lead the group, take notes, where will notes be kept and who will plan meetings



CREATING TERMS OF REFERENCE^{3,4}

By answering the questions and statements below, you and your team can set objectives for your group and outline how your group will work together. Appendix C provides a worksheet on which you can record your answers. Appendix D provides an example of how one Capital Health wellness group wrote their terms of reference.

Group Name

Group Purpose and Objectives

The purpose is a short, general description of what the group does and why it was formed and of the area in which the group works. An objective is the breakdown of a higher purpose. Are Objectives SMART? That is Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely. Note how the group relates to Capital Health's mission and goals.

Function of the Group

In order to ensure efficient functioning of the team, roles need to be defined and assigned to specific individuals.

Functions:

- What are the typical duties of the group?
- Is the group advisory or will it make decisions?
- Who will publish and distribute minutes. Where will they be located?

Composition of the Group

- Describe the type of people who will serve in the group and any qualifications they are expected to have.
- How many people do you need in the group?
- What are the terms of membership?
- Outline group membership by member type (i.e. position).
Keep membership to a maximum of 10-12 people.
- Note that new members may be sought as required.
- Consider additional membership which may include resource people on specific topics; note if their role is information sharing only or if they participate in decision making.
- How long will members remain on the team?
- Considering staggering terms of appointment to ensure continuity.
- Consider how the Team Leader and Note taker are chosen (considers sharing or rotating the role).
- Identify the minimum number of group members that need to present at meeting to make final decisions (i.e. quorum).

Commitment of the Group

- Estimate meeting frequency. Will meetings be at the call of the Team Leader?

Accountability of the Group

- Consider the financial implications or budget of the group, including structure, decision-making and the approval process. (See Section 3 for funding ideas).
- To whom is the group accountable? (usually a person or committee)
- When will self-monitoring activities take place – i.e. when will the Terms of Reference be reviewed?

STEP 4: GETTING IT TOGETHER

What are the ground rules?

Ground rules can help group members recognize and use appropriate behavior that lends itself to more productive, open and yes - fun - meetings! Examples of ground rules include³:

- Consider meeting discussion confidential unless otherwise indicated.
- Start on time and end on time.
- Stick to the agenda as set out.
- Don't engage in side conversations.
- Respect each person's opinion even if you disagree.
- Have fun.
- Promote and play a part in creating a non-judgmental atmosphere.
- Celebrate the success and achievements of group members.
- Encourage discussion for all members.
- Continuously evaluate our work and use results in our planning processes.

Having useful meetings²

A good meeting doesn't happen on its own. It is important to plan and prepare. Consider the following tips when preparing for meetings:

- A chair (or rotating chair or co-chairs) and note taker have been selected.
- The chair's role has been defined.
- Is a face to face meeting necessary? Can work be done by phone or email?
- Meeting place has been booked and is equipped for meeting.
- Group members have been notified of time and place.
- If parking is an issue, group members know where they can park during the meeting.
- An agenda has been made and is not too ambitious.
- A break has been scheduled if the meeting is two hours or longer.
- Before the meeting the agenda, with purpose and desired outcomes, has been sent to all group members.

Making an agenda and taking notes

A meeting can be more effective if the agenda is prepared in advance. A sample agenda form can be found in Appendix E. Sample meeting notes form can be found in Appendix F.

Having effective meetings

Even the best planned meetings can end up having problems. Sometimes group members can get off track talking about other things. It is important for the group chair to keep things on track. Some tips for effective meetings and group leadership include¹:

- Listen and make sure everyone's voices are heard, even if you disagree.
Try to get input from everyone rather than have the same few people take over.
Ask quieter people questions to get their input.
- Keep discussions on target. If getting off track, simply say,
we hope to have everyone out on time, so can we please stick to the agenda.
For those who have time, perhaps we can talk about "XYZ" after this meeting.
- Stick to the agenda.
- Establish decision making process (i.e. consensus, majority vote).
- Move on - once a topic has been discussed, ask the group to decide on activities
or next steps to bring the idea or topic to life.
- Group members feel more involved if everyone has something to do.
- Follow up – The chair needs to follow up with those members who have agreed to take tasks on.
- Keep notes – keeping notes is a great way to stay on track and provides a record of decisions and follow up actions.

Keeping your WG engaged and enthusiastic¹

After a while it may seem that your WG has run out of ideas.
These ideas may help keep the drive alive:

- Give credit when members have a great idea and do a great job.
Recognition is a powerful motivator. For some a simple thank you will do
or you can write about an accomplishment in the Capital Health Update.
- Be positive.
- Keep everyone involved in the decision making process; ask the group what could be done differently.
- Share the workload to prevent boredom and burnout.
- Add new members to replace those that retire.
- Communicate and celebrate successes within the WG and to the rest of Capital Health.
- Take turns attending wellness conferences and come back and share learnings.
- Have a team building day for WG members.
- Have fun! Share a joke, have a potluck, bring funny props to meetings.

STEP 5: WHAT'S NEXT?

Now that you have your WG up and running, you can start to plan, implement and evaluate health promotion activities, (see Section 3).



*learning
how to make
healthy choices*



Eva Deal from MVMH Site shares this story...

Last spring, Angie Stewart, one of our Ward Clerks here at Musquodoboit Valley Memorial Hospital (MVMH) initiated a Weight Watchers at Work program and it is still ongoing this year. We are now into session 3. Many employees from both MVMH and Braeside have joined in along with some community members. We meet every Friday evening and have a good time sharing stories, triumphs and failures, as well as learning how to eat healthy choices to achieve healthy weight loss.

Another healthy initiative is the inclusion of cranberry, strawberry kiwi juice as well as water as choices available from our pop machine as opposed to just pop.

We also have "pot luck" sessions (usually 2 to 3 times per year). While many of the dishes (especially the "desserts") do not necessarily fit into the healthy choices category, the boost to overall moral is very healthy. So I guess it depends on how you define "health benefits".

*"There is no power for change greater than
a community discovering what it cares about." Margaret J. Wheatley*