

Promoting Health in the Workplace

What We Know

All sectors of our society need to join in the response to the epidemic of non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

The Caribbean has the highest probability on premature death, compared to other subregions in the Americas, including North America. In 2012 NCDs and their risk factors were responsible for 3 out of 4 deaths (77%) in the Region (*PAHO*). Many persons between 30 and 69 years of age are dying due to preventable diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, cancers, diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases. Working age persons are dying unnecessarily, resulting in personal and productivity losses.

Many private sector organisations and businesses have already implemented workplace wellness programmes, offering NCD screening and creating health-promoting environments for staff. Workplace wellness programmes are cost-effective, reducing employee ill-health (and lost productivity), absenteeism, high medical costs for employers and workers' compensation claims. For workers themselves, as well as gaining obvious health benefits from such programmes, they can experience increased morale and relief from the effects of household poverty, premature death, disability, loss of independence and loss of job and income.

The scope of the private sector's role in the challenge to NCDs is broader still. Some companies are working for consumers too, with a number of food manufacturers reducing salt and sugar in their products.

Caribbean Wellness Day (second Saturday in September) has also provided an opportunity for the private sector to deepen its involvement in the NCD response; proposing events, mobilising participants and bringing critical human and financial resources.

What you can do in the private sector

Policies

- Promote wellness programmes with clear goals and objectives and developed with staff input.
- Offer NCD screenings for employees annually (free or heavily subsidised).
- Integrate NCD interventions in the workplace as part of HR policy
- Incorporate breastfeeding into programs that promote maternal and child health and child development, and prevent noncommunicable diseases and invest in these programs
- Develop toolkits to help establish sustainable workplace programmes.
- Make your workplace 100% smoke-free.



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Activities

- Mark Caribbean Wellness Day (CWD) with health and fitness-related activities such as health fairs/ fun runs.
- Continue activities on a regular basis throughout the year, e.g. line dancing, aerobic etc.
- Support CWD by sponsoring public service announcements, advertising in newspaper supplements, and featuring the CWD logo on company merchandise.
- Where possible, provide gym/exercise facilities for employees.
- Encourage competitive challenges among employees such as a 10,000 steps challenge.
- Make blood pressure monitors and scales available to employees.
- Ensure that staff restaurants/canteens offer healthy options cooked in healthy ways.
- Support local food producers by using locally grown fruits and vegetables in staff restaurants/ canteens.
- Invite chefs to showcase recipes for easy to make, tasty, low-fat, low-salt meals.

If you are a food producer

- Share good practices in product reformulation regionally, e.g. reduced salt in bread in Barbados.
- Support nutritional labelling.
- Support marketing of healthy foods.

An Example of Physical Activity in the Workplace - Jamaica



The Ministry of Health, Jamaica launched a [Physical Activity Guide and Toolkit](#) for the workplace in March 2015, aimed at reducing the level of physical inactivity by at least 5% over the next five years. The kit comprises useful and relevant information sheets, as well as forms to be filled out, that will help individual employees assess their own health status.

More about:

- [Caribbean Wellness Day](#)
- [Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health](#)
- [Port of Spain Evaluation on Noncommunicable Diseases](#)
- [Regional Mortality Information System. Pan American Health Organization](#)
- [Caribbean Public Health Agency \(CARPHA\)](#)
- [Healthy Caribbean Coalition \(HCC\)](#)
- [Pan American Health Organization \(PAHO\)](#)