



worksites

Approximately 45% of working adults in Alaska are employed by organizations that employ 250 or more employees. Because larger organizations are also the most likely groups to have worksite programs, the statewide inventory targeted this group of employers for the telephone surveys. These organizations were identified by the Alaska Department of Labor and included 115 different employers, including both private companies and government organizations. Telephone surveys were administered to human resource/personnel directors for 97 out of the 115 (84.4%) employers of more than 250 people.

Question #1 – Approximately what percent of your company’s employees have jobs that require significant physical exertion?

Results: All but two companies surveyed said that at least some of their employees have a job that requires significant physical exertion. One-third (33.3%) of employers report that from 1% to 25% of their workers have jobs that require significant physical exertion.

Question #2 – Do you have seasonal employees? For what seasons are they hired?

Results: Seventy of the employers we surveyed have seasonal employees. Forty-seven employers have seasonal employees during the summer, and thirty have winter employees.

Question #3 – Does your company have more than one worksite?

Results: Eighty-eight (88.2%) surveyed employers have employees at more than one worksite.

Question #4 – In the past year, has your company sponsored any sports teams (e.g. softball, basketball teams) or physical activity events (e.g. fun runs, fitness challenges) for employees?

Results: More than half of businesses surveyed (49) sponsored an employee sports team or physical activity event in the past year.



Question #5 – Does your company have on-site exercise facilities?

Results: Fifty-three of the employers we surveyed have exercise facilities present in at least some of their worksites.

Question #6 – Does your company have signs promoting the use of stairs?

Results: Only six out of ninety respondents indicated that they have signs in the workplace promoting the use of stairs.

Question #7 – Does your company subsidize or offer discounted memberships to offsite fitness facilities?

Results: Forty-three surveyed employers indicated that they offer some kind of discount to an off-site exercise facility.

Question #8 – Does your company have a policy allowing employees to be physically active during normal working hours?

Results: Thirty-five employers report having a policy that allows flexibility in work schedules to allow for physical activity.

Question #9 – Can your employees obtain food or snacks at work?

Results: All but two employers make food or snacks available to their employees at work.

Question #10 – Are any of the following foods available in the workplace: 1) Fresh fruit? 2) Cooked vegetables? 3) Fat free/low fat salad dressing? 4) Fat free/low fat yogurt? 5) 100% fruit juice? 6) Fresh salads? 7) 1% or skim milk?

Results: The most popular healthy options available are 100% fruit juice (79) and fresh fruit (67). Sixty-two employers offer cooked vegetables, fat free/low fat yogurt, and fresh salads. Fifty-five offer fat free/low fat salad dressings, and fifty-nine have 1% or skim milk.

Question #11 – In the past year, has your company offered any of the following to employees at your worksite: 1) Blood pressure screening? 2) Cholesterol screening? 3) Blood sugar test?



Results: Results for risk factor screening offered to employees at work vary depending on the type of screening. Fifty-one (57.0%) of companies surveyed say that they have offered blood pressure screening at some or all of their worksites. Another thirty-five offered screening for cholesterol, and thirty-four have offered blood sugar screening in the past year.

Question #12– For those employees identified through screening as high risk, which of the following occurred: 1) Referral to physician? 2) Referral to a counseling/education program? 3) Given information/literature? 4) Nothing?

Results: Distribution of information/literature was the most common (21 employers) response to a high-risk designation as a result of a screening. Less common responses included referral to a clinician (19 employers), and referral to a counseling/education program (10 employers).

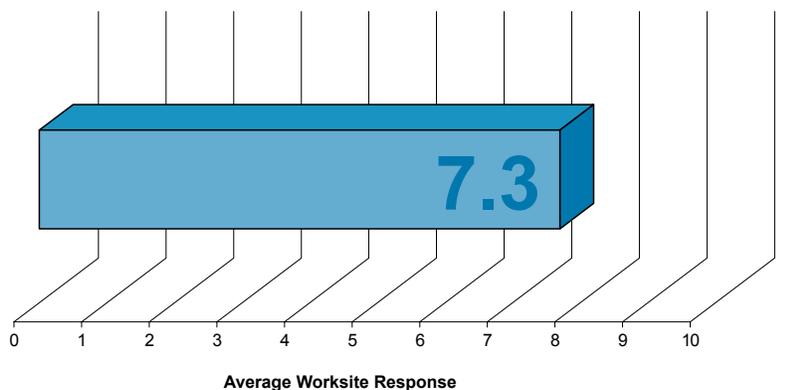
Question #13 – Does your company’s health insurance cover: 1) Blood pressure testing? 2) Blood sugar testing? 3) Cholesterol testing? 4) Tobacco cessation programs? 5) None of the above?

Results: Many employers indicated that screenings for risk factors are covered by their health insurance. Blood pressure (69 employers), blood sugar (68 employers), and cholesterol (65 employers) are covered most often. Thirty-one employers report that tobacco cessation is covered by their health insurance.

Question #14 – Given your company’s various priorities, on a scale of 1 to 10, how interested are you in discussing ways to improve the overall health of our employees?

Results: When asked their interest level (on a scale of 1 to 10) of discussing ways to improve the overall health of their employees, seventy-five of the eighty-three responding employers rate their interest at 5 or higher.

Figure 14.





Largest Alaskan Employers

Detailed information about health related benefits Alaskans receive at work was retrieved through key informant interviews with six of the ten largest Alaskan employers. The following chart lists the agencies contacted along with the number of Alaskans they employ, and the wellness initiatives they provide. While each of these agencies offer some kind of preventative measures, few have a formalized employee wellness program. Note: All six of the ten largest employers in Alaska that we were able to contact are public entities like school districts and state agencies. The four we were unable to contact consisted of a private seafood company, a federal agency, a private hospital, and a city government agency. It is important to consider the limitations in employee benefits and programs that a public agency might be able to provide for it's employees as opposed to a private business when viewing the following data.

Employer	Number of Employees	Wellness Initiatives
Anchorage School District	7,500	Discounted health club memberships, blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar testing.
University of Alaska	4,500	\$400 health option (all), LIFE wellness program (UAF), Flextime (UAF), Access to fitness facilities (all).
Fairbanks North Star Borough School District	2,500	Access to fitness facilities, discounted memberships at health clubs, diagnostic screening, and wellness programs (some sites).
Mat-Su Borough Schools	2,000	Discounted health club memberships, occasional fitness events (some sites).
State of Alaska - Department of Transportation and Public Facilities	2,000	On-site fitness facilities, flex time, diagnostic screening (some sites).
State of Alaska - Department of Health and Social Services	1,600	Flex time (some sites).



University of Alaska Fairbanks
Let's Include Fitness Everyday (LIFE)
Fairbanks, Alaska

The University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) Athletics and Recreation Department provides the LIFE wellness program to all faculty, staff, and students. The program consists of wellness-related activities and events geared to improve overall health. Program participants get access to the student recreation center, and UAF employees are eligible for flextime if they are participating in a LIFE event held during normal working hours.

The UAF administration is aware that wellness programs on campus help reduce the incidences of mental and physical sickness, and their concomitant sick leave and help improve attitudes, especially during the long, dark, cold winters.



Recommendations for Alaskan Worksites

Results from the worksite telephone survey and key informant interviews show that worksites in Alaska are generally lacking in physical activity and nutrition-related policies, programs, and environmental supports. Recommendations for increasing physical activity and wellness at work include:

- ▶ Increasing the percent of worksites that have policies supporting physical activity for all employees during work time, (i.e., during working hours, using flextime, providing flexible breaks and lunch periods) (question #8);
- ▶ Increasing the percent of worksites that subsidize, either directly or through their insurance provider, health club or exercise facility memberships off-site (question #7);
- ▶ Increasing the percent of worksites with stairs that provide prompts or signage to promote their use (question #6);
- ▶ Increasing the percent of worksites that provide and promote company-sponsored exercise programs for employees, other than an exercise facility (i.e., walking, stretching, low back health, aerobics), at the worksite during the previous year (question #4);
- ▶ Increasing the percent of worksites that provide and maintain outdoor exercise areas and supports (i.e., playing fields, biking/walking trails, bike racks) for use by employees and others at the worksite (question #5);
- ▶ Increasing the percentage of worksites that provide showers and changing facilities for employees who want to exercise on their way to work or during working hours (question #5);
- ▶ Increasing the percent of worksites with cafeterias, snack bars, or on-site food vendors that offer heart-healthy food and beverage choices (question #10).