

March 30, 2001

Ms. Carol Hallowell
Office of Work/Life Programs
U.S. Office of Personnel Management
1900 E Street, N.W., Room 7315
Washington, DC 20415

Dear Ms. Hallowell:

This is in response to OPM's memorandum of January 10, 2001, concerning Preventive Health Services at the Federal Workplace, and requesting agencies to share their preventive health initiatives in order to identify best worksite practices.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has had an extensive employee health program since the agency's inception in 1975. Over the years, we have expanded and refined the program in response to changing medical practice and agency requirements. The NRC's program was recognized at the 1996 OPM Director's Awards for Outstanding Employee Health Services Programs. Also, our wellness program manager gave a presentation on the "Showcase of Award Winning Agency Health Services Programs," at the National Conference on Federal Employee Assistance and Health Enhancement Programs the same year.

NRC's current wellness program provides employees with a complete health promotion and disease prevention strategy, focusing on lifestyle changes for the purpose of enhancing job performance and decreasing absenteeism. NRC contracts with Whole Health Management, a commercial firm which provides wellness services to a number of Federal agencies and private corporations. Components of NRC's wellness program include Employee Health Maintenance and Disease Detection, Employee Education and Disease Prevention, an On-site Health Center (Headquarters), Fitness Services and an On-site Fitness Center (Headquarters), Ergonomics, and Occupational Safety and Health services. We will detail these components below.

Employee Health Maintenance and Disease Detection Program: Services are available to all employees on a voluntary basis and focus on health risk assessment, disease detection, education, and lifestyle changes for improved health and fitness. For health risk assessment and reduction, we evaluate employees using an instrument designed to show how individual lifestyle choices can affect health. We present the results to the employee using a computerized report, which is then interpreted by a healthcare professional. Using the report, the healthcare professional identifies health risks and makes recommendations for lifestyle changes to improve health and fitness.

All employees age 40 and over are eligible for a biennial physical examination. Those in certain job categories, such as investigators, are eligible for an annual examination. The examinations include medical history-taking; blood and urine testing; audio and visual testing; electrocardiogram (EKG); and examination by a physician. Optional tests include flexible fiberoptic sigmoidoscopy; bimanual breast exam; Pap smear, and pelvic and digital rectal

exams for women; and Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) blood test and digital rectal examination for men. We also give an annual pulmonary function test to employees whose duties may require them to wear a respirator. In addition, investigators receive a treadmill stress test every five years. Employees may be given additional tests, or may be examined at more frequent intervals if medical findings, hazards in the work environment, or other job-related conditions warrant such evaluation. They are advised by the physician of any abnormal test results or conditions requiring treatment, referred to their private physician or given the names of three (3) physicians in the community if they do not have a personal physician.

Other services we offer include job-related immunizations, flu shots, individual health care advice and counseling, and medical clearance for fitness program participation. In addition, individuals who volunteer as first responders are trained in cardiopulmonary resuscitation, basic first aid, and blood-borne pathogens. We have purchased Automatic External Defibrillators (AED) for each of the major NRC locations. We offer our employees Mobile Mammography programs as well.

Employee Education and Disease Prevention Program: NRC conducts annual disease screening programs throughout the agency to detect possible medical conditions including heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, high cholesterol levels, glaucoma, breast and cervical cancer, and prostate cancer. We hold Health Fairs on a regular basis to provide information on a wide variety of traditional and alternative medical therapies, as well as fitness, safety, and EAP issues. Lunch-time programs host guest speakers who present information on a wide range of topics such as, Alzheimer's disease, gastroesophageal reflux, migraine headache, sleep disorders, diabetes, osteoporosis, back and joint health, and stress reduction. The Health Center sponsors on-going Weight Watchers and smoking cessation programs. We publish a joint Health/Fitness/EAP publication called "The Health Crunch" quarterly and distribute it agency-wide. We are also considering the possibility of posting it on our Intranet. The Health Center uses a bulletin board, prominently displayed in the waiting area, to provide information on a number of health-related topics, and offers a library of health videos for viewing.

On-site Health Center: This 2600 square foot state-of-the-art facility services approximately 2,000 Headquarters employees. It is staffed by a full-time Medical Director, Chief Nurse, Staff Nurse, and Medical Secretary. The Medical Director is responsible for the daily operation, coordination, performance, and oversight of all services performed under the wellness contract. She supervises the nursing and administrative staff, and employs a variety of marketing strategies to encourage employees' use of the Health Center. She maintains a close relationship with the Fitness Center staff and assists in the design and oversight of physical fitness programs for employees with medical conditions or special health-related needs. The Chief Nurse, in addition to her normal duties, coordinates regional health services. Also, to ensure confidentiality of medical information and comparability of services throughout the agency, the Chief Nurse receives and maintains all medical records, originating both at Headquarters and in the field.

In addition to the health services mentioned above, the on-site Health Center also provides first aid and limited treatment for non-occupational illness and injury, physician-prescribed treatments and medication, first point of contact for OWCP illness or injury, and advice and

guidance to NRC management on health related issues, such as employee requests for reasonable accommodation for handicapping conditions. Medical specialists, such as cardiologists, radiologists, ophthalmologists, psychiatrists, gastroenterologists, and infectious disease experts, are available on a referral and consulting basis.

Fitness Services and On-Site Fitness Center: Approximately 600 Headquarters employees belong to the 5,500 square foot Fitness Center. Membership in the center costs the employee \$8.00 per pay period and covers a full range of fitness services. These services include physical fitness assessments which test the employee's blood pressure and heart rate, height and body weight, body circumference, cardiovascular fitness, low back flexibility, and abdominal strength. They also include personalized fitness programs or fitness prescriptions according to fitness screening results; and a minimum of fifteen aerobic exercise sessions weekly. Exercise equipment includes free weights, Cybex weight circuits, treadmills, bicycles, spinners, rowers and steppers. The fitness program puts special emphasis on employees requiring physical improvement from a medical standpoint. Staff includes a full-time director, associate director, a fitness specialist, and fitness instructor/receptionist. Participants have the flexibility of making up time at the beginning or end of their workday for that used in physical fitness activities during working hours. NRC offers a subsidy to regional office personnel to join a fitness center within close proximity to their home or job location.

Occupational Safety and Health Program: This agency-wide program supports the agency goal of reducing and/or eliminating health, safety, and fire hazards in NRC buildings. We utilize the services of certified industrial hygienists, certified safety professionals, and other qualified experts to provide consultation, analysis, assessment, and plan reviews, to assist the NRC in achieving these goals.

Ergonomics Program: To prevent repetitive motion injuries and other related problems, the NRC is developing an agency-wide Ergonomics Program. This program offers office workstation and video display terminal assessments and follow-up by qualified ergonomics specialists. The program also includes appropriate individual and group training, as well as a series of brochures which describe techniques to prevent illness and injury.

We, at the NRC, are proud of our wellness program and encourage employees to participate in a number of ways. Managers at all levels set an example by joining the Fitness Center, appearing at Health Fairs, and attending education programs. Excused leave is granted to employees who take part in programs which are agency-sponsored, and many educational programs are conducted during the lunch period to accommodate those who may not otherwise be able to attend.

With approximately 80 percent of NRC employees over age 40, we firmly believe that the investment we have made in our wellness program has been a sound one. Many serious and potentially serious conditions have been diagnosed by our Health Center staff and the number

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of NRC smokers has been dramatically reduced. These and other achievements of our wellness program have resulted in a healthier, fitter, and, thus, more productive NRC workforce.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Paul E. Bird, Director
Office of Human Resources

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