

Best practices in promoting community wellness

Strong communities, thriving people



What is community wellness? It's about:

- Creating opportunities and conditions that support people to be healthy, happy, and achieve their full potential.
- Using and increasing local skills and knowledge so that people can work together to make their community a great place to live, work, learn and play.
- Building strong, caring communities through cooperation and partnerships.

How do we get there?

1. Plan for success

- ✓ Build on the strengths of your community – people, place and history.
- ✓ Develop a clear purpose. Involve people early on in this process.
- ✓ Start small with something that is achievable and will create enthusiasm for doing more.
- ✓ Involve as many people as possible in decision-making and make rules about how decisions will be made transparent.
- ✓ Combine the evidence of what works with local wisdom.
- ✓ Create a culture of learning – use evidence, evaluate as you go, learn from mistakes, share successes.

*The more people
who are engaged
and share their
gifts, the healthier
and stronger a
community will be.*

2. Strengthen social relationships

- ✓ Create a fun and supportive environment where everyone feels welcome, safe and respected. Create opportunities for people to gather, socialize, have fun and learn from one another.
- ✓ Celebrate milestones, progress and steps in the right direction – provide immediate feedback to keep motivation up.
- ✓ Take time to express gratitude, show kindness and generosity, and inspire hope and optimism.
- ✓ Share stories, enjoy, and care for each other.
- ✓ Take time to build, strengthen and, if needed, repair relationships.



3. Nurture champions, leaders and volunteers

- ✓ Leadership is everywhere – recognize and support leaders and champions.
- ✓ Recognize the important role of the first followers – their actions build momentum to make wellness contagious.
- ✓ Tap into the gifts and talents of all people – everyone can contribute and make a difference.

4. Be inclusive

- ✓ Cast a wide net so that people of all ages, abilities and cultures can participate. Reach out to people who face more challenges.
- ✓ Think about cost, transportation and child care so that everyone can participate.
- ✓ Pick times and locations that work for the people you are trying to involve.

5. Make it meaningful

- ✓ Start with a positive vision of where you want your community to be 1, 5, 10 years down the road.
- ✓ Take small steps towards a goal that is meaningful for the community and fits into the bigger picture.
- ✓ Work together for a better world, starting with your community.



6. Build individual and community capacity

- ✓ Spark positive emotions – emotions like joy, pride and hope open hearts and minds to new ideas, connections and relationships.
- ✓ Build bridges between different groups in the community – listen across differences and find common ground.
- ✓ Go broad by involving many sectors: government, business, faith community, service clubs, etc. Form partnerships and link networks together to expand your influence.
- ✓ Develop and share skills and knowledge – think hands-on learning, mentoring, inter-generational learning, employment, resume-building.
- ✓ Seek outside help when you need it, but make sure that skills and knowledge are transferred to community people.

7. Aim for consistency

- ✓ Take steps to hang on to staff and volunteers – show appreciation, recognize efforts in small ways.
- ✓ Expect and practice respectful listening and speaking. Set clear expectations and boundaries about acceptable behavior and help people meet them.
- ✓ Schedule activities on a regular basis. Be predictable and keep going – sometimes it takes a while for something new to catch on.

8. Make healthier choices easier



- ✓ Make healthy food and drink available at low or no cost – limit pop, chips, candy and other unhealthy options.
- ✓ Increase opportunities to be active. Get outside into nature – nurture body, mind and soul.
- ✓ Adopt or adapt healthy policies to guide decision-making.