



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

WELLNESS LEAVE – PILOT PROGRAM

St. Thomas/St. Croix, Virgin Islands

A. PURPOSE

The University of the Virgin Islands recognizes that the ability of an organization to achieve its objectives is dependent upon the well-being of all employees. The key elements of a healthy workplace include the physical and cultural environment, as well as the policies, health practices and procedures and personal resources that guide our work. The University is committed to upholding a safe and healthy environment which encompasses positive lifelong health habits, personal fitness, good nutritional behavior, and other health-related programs for all its employees. A wellness policy and supporting program will convey institutional values and support for employee health.

The wellness program will be guided by this policy, which is committed to the institutional management values of spiritual and emotional wellbeing. The University will develop strategies and initiatives in order to provide the necessary information, instruction and direction to its employees. Embrace of a healthy lifestyle will contribute to lifelong health and wellbeing. The program will focus on physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing, as well as stress management. A healthy environment leads to improved satisfaction and morale, which contribute to a more effective organization.

B. SCOPE

This policy applies to all UVI employees, except for probationary employees, and aligns with health and safety policies and guidelines. The wellness program may be available as part of a group health plan, or separately.

C. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The policy provides the foundation for developing activities and modifying work environments, policies and practices to support the health and wellbeing of all employees. Positive benefits are also likely to extend beyond employees to result in better health for families and the community.

The University will provide a healthy workplace by:

1. Establishing and supporting a wellness committee;
2. Creating, promoting and supporting a wellness program;
3. Promoting proper nutrition and eating habits that will support and contribute to employees' health and ultimate performance;
4. Building the knowledge, skills and abilities of employees to make improvements in their health practices and to help cope and deal with the social and work aspects of their lives;

5. Providing a physical and social environment supportive of employee well-being;
6. Understanding workplace issues that impact the health and well-being of employees;
7. Consulting with employees to ensure workplace wellness strategies meet the needs of the workforce;
8. Promoting physical activity through fitness programs, movement exercises, and aerobic activities;
9. Enhancing employees' sense of influence over their work and their lives;
10. Training and coaching employees who want to become involved in the program for developmental reasons.

D. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. MANAGEMENT

The University of the Virgin Islands Cabinet will value and enhance the wellness of employees by:

- a. Providing workplace environments and systems that are supportive of employee wellness;
- b. Support and encourage employee participation in the Wellness Program as a component of employee involvement in professional development;
- c. Contribute ideas, opinions and expertise to the work of the Wellness Committee; and
- d. Participate in the programs, activities and resources provided through the Wellness Program; and
- e. Provide healthy food options for meetings, training and other events associated with the University.

2. HUMAN RESOURCES

The Human Resources Department will enhance the wellness of employees by:

- a. Administering the wellness program and the wellness committee;
- b. In consultation with the wellness committee and management, annually review and revise this policy in order to provide an environment which supports employee well-being; and
- c. Incorporating details of the wellness policy into the new employee orientation.

3. WELLNESS COMMITTEE

The University of the Virgin Islands shall establish a Wellness Committee comprised of at least two representatives from Human Resources (to include the employee benefits specialist), the Campus Nurse, one faculty and staff representative per campus, and a dietitian or food service professional. Participation in the Wellness Program is voluntary. Employees are encouraged to ensure physical fitness before participating in physical activity.

The committee shall:

- a. Develop, promote, and oversee a comprehensive multifaceted plan, its events and activities, to promote health and wellness;
- b. Assess employee and workplace wellness needs by obtaining input from employees which should outline ways to encourage healthy eating, physical activity, and other elements of holistic health;
- c. Familiarize employees with the inter-connected avenues to achieve health and wellness

- d. Encourage long-term commitment to workplace wellness;
- e. Secure grant or other funding in support of wellness; and
- f. Explore various health and wellness opportunities.

4. EMPLOYEES

The University of the Virgin Islands employees will:

- a. Work within policies and procedures implemented to address workplace wellness;
- b. Contribute ideas; and
- c. Participate in the wellness program.

E. COMMUNICATION, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

A healthy workplace requires institutional commitment and participation. Employee participation can include developing, implementing and reviewing health actions and policies, involvement in planning lifestyle health promotion programs at work, identifying problems, devising solutions and then implementing and evaluating these solutions. Employees are encouraged to participate in any/all programs that are made available to them.

On a yearly basis, the Wellness Policy will be evaluated by Cabinet, Human Resources and the Wellness Committee to ensure relevance and adherence to best practices through use of data and trends indicating outcomes. Annual analysis will be conducted to determine if employee workplace wellness needs are being met. UVI employees will be surveyed to determine which wellness initiatives are important to them. These results will be compiled and analyzed by the Wellness Committee to develop sessions and initiatives for the coming year. Monthly Wellness Initiatives will take place during work hours, over lunch breaks and after work hours to provide flexibility for all employees. Details regarding Wellness sessions will be communicated through email as well as any other approved communication medium.

The Wellness Policy will be monitored by Human Resources and the members of the Wellness Committee, who will ensure compliance with established guidelines. An annual summary report of program activities, assessments and milestones shall be provided to the University community.

F. ACTIVITIES

- a. Wellness Fairs, Health Fairs and others which promote physical activity, such as walkathons and group walking, will be encouraged.
- b. Stress and time management seminars shall be put in place to encourage life balance.
- c. Approximately 2 hours per week of release time or administrative leave will be allowed for faculty/staff members to participate in health-promoting seminars, conferences, etc.
- d. Clinics will be offered on campus, in order to provide periodic screening for chronic lifestyle diseases.
- e. Staff will be encouraged to set medical appointments for screening of cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and other lifestyle diseases.
- f. Staff will be provided reminders about the already established Employee Assistance Program, a part of the CIGNA health insurance plan.

CIGNA EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The University renders support to its employees through the CIGNA Employee Assistance Program. This program is available to help staff deal with personal problems that might adversely impact their work performance, health, and well-being. The EAP is a free service available to all members of staff and any member in the household. It is provided through a highly qualified team of consultants. The program provides professional assessment, referral, and counseling services to employees.

The EAP can be accessed through:

- Manager/Supervisor referral
- Self-referral
- Peer referral

The service is also held in strict confidence. Information obtained by an EAP representative will not be divulged or discussed with the employee's family, peers, or employer without prior written consent from the employee.

A troubled employee may convey signs that include:

- Tardiness
- Misconduct
- Depression

Services available include:

- Anger Management
- Conflict Resolution and Mediation (UWI-PULSE)
- Crisis Trauma Debriefing
- Stress Management-for managers & employees
- HIV/AIDS Prevention & counseling
- Grief Therapy
- Financial Counseling
- Men's Health Problems & Sexuality
- Women's Health Problems & Sexuality
- Health & Safety Awareness
- Acupuncture Therapy

Effective Date: ...

Last Revised: September 11, 2018

References:

University of the West Indies

University of Western Ontario