



Photo: FirstNet Program at AT&T

# Is Your Wellness Program Thriving?

By Dr. Anna Courie

Director of Responder Wellness,  
FirstNet Program at AT&T

The socio-ecological model of health and behavior change identifies different levels of intervention in which to influence health. These include the individual; the family, unit or group; the organization and community; and federal and national levels. What all these systems have in common is that to be successful with the planned change, you must write out a plan. In all these systems, those who are most successful and more likely to achieve intended outcomes are those whose written plans meet specific criteria.

Plans that address health disparities, risk factors, or health promotion are community health improvement plans or health

promotion strategic plans. These plans have an evidenced-based approach that helps organizations reach desired outcomes from the health and wellness program. Programs that formally outline

---

*This helps ensure responders are not just physically ready for their jobs, but also mentally, spiritually, socially, family, and financially ready for what they face every day they walk in the door to care for their communities.*

---

goals, objectives, and strategy for the top health concerns are more likely to achieve those aims.

## Setting the criteria

High quality health strategic plans have specific criteria. They clearly identify the target population. They identify the goals and objectives – written following the SMART principle, as in Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound. SMART objectives help identify who is responsible for certain activities, by a specific period of time. And they establish performance criteria for the program.

Plans should identify the resources needed to be successful.

*Continued...*

And they should clearly articulate the tasks and activities that need to occur to achieve your aim. Finally, strong improvement plans build in evaluation criteria. This way, the organization can demonstrate outcomes from their program and clearly communicate if the program was successful.

## **Facilitating success**

In addition to writing out the organizational goals for your wellness programs, there are additional factors that can facilitate success. These include engagement from leadership, a dedicated wellness staff and formalized roles/responsibilities for the wellness program. Engagement from top leadership is critical. Subordinates watch to see how the head of an organization demonstrates wellness behaviors. And more importantly, they watch to see how frontline supervisors demonstrate wellness behaviors. When leadership walks the walk, the newer employees embrace that wellness is a part of how we do business.

True investment into a wellness program means dedicating your financial and human resource capital towards the plan. Strong wellness programs don't happen in a vacuum. They require the organization to commit to supporting the whole approach to wellness. This helps ensure responders are not just physically ready for their jobs, but also mentally, spiritually, socially, family, and financially ready for what they face every day they walk in the door to care for their communities.

When you formally identify the roles, responsibilities and plan for your wellness program, you are setting your organization up for success. These characteristics help organizations shift the culture from one of reaction to critical health threats to one where health is a part of the fabric of organizational readiness.

When I was developing health improvement plans for an organization, I learned quickly that I couldn't do it on my own. I learned that we were far more successful when my leadership made my wellness program a strategic priority. And we worked together to achieve our aims

As my old boss liked to say: "It's a TEAM effort: Together, Everyone Achieves More."

---

*Dr. Anna Fitch Courie, Director of Responder Wellness, FirstNet Program at AT&T is a nurse, Army wife, former adjunct professor, and author. Anna holds a Bachelor's in Nursing from Clemson University; a Master's in Nursing Education from the University of Wyoming; and a Doctor of Nursing Practice degree from Ohio State University. She is a passionate Clemson football fan; loves to read, cook, walk, hike; and prior to COVID-19, was an avid traveler.*