



Case Study

# Best practices in action: University of Michigan wellness champions are lynchpin to success



How does a University that employs 43,000 people across three campuses and a health system engage participation in its wellness program to improve population health and decrease health risks? For the University of Michigan, its robust wellness champion network led the way to a 2014 Healthiest 100 Workplaces in America awards and substantial risk reduction among its population.

**350+**  
WELLNESS  
CHAMPIONS

- ✓ PROMOTE THE PROGRAM
- ✓ EDUCATE EMPLOYEES
- ✓ REINFORCE THE CULTURE OF HEALTH

## Wellness Champions Lead the Way

The University of Michigan was named one of the 2014 Healthiest 100 Workplaces in America in recognition of its efforts to incorporate effective employee wellness programs and practices into the University workplace.

The University of Michigan employs more than 43,000 people across its three campuses and health system, and about half of them actively participate each year in MHealthy, the University's employee wellness program.



MHealthy launched in 2009 as part of a long-term plan to improve health at the University of Michigan. The program is available to University employees and features, among other things: an annual health assessment; [onsite wellness screenings](#) and flu shots; counseling and coaching services; numerous physical activity programs offered throughout campus buildings; healthy eating, weight management, stress management, and alcohol management programs; tobacco treatment, back care and

ergonomic services, and online programs. Many of these programs are also available to employee spouses and other qualified adults.

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**43,000**  
EMPLOYEES ACROSS  
**3 CAMPUSES**  
AND HEALTH SYSTEM

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To support these programming elements and to encourage understanding and engagement, the University established an extensive wellness champion network of more than [350 wellness champions](#) across all campus locations. These individuals work to promote the program, educate employees about the University's commitment to wellness, and reinforce the culture of health.



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## Wellness Champions Lead the Way



The role of wellness champions is particularly important in large, diverse populations with multiple locations, such as the University. Providing access to an individual who is visible and known by employees, and who can provide information about the wellness program, has a significant impact on participation and can support program marketing and communication efforts.

The network of wellness champions for the University is volunteer-based and they are dedicated to their respective units or departments. Champions put a human face on

the wellness program and serve as a source of information and education for University employees. They help to promote wellness programming, answer questions employees may have about the

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MHealthy program, and participate in the programs themselves.

The University has incorporated the wellness champion network into their organizational culture.

This well-established network receives frequent recognition from management for their efforts in promoting MHealthy initiatives—a key component in the success of the network. Members of the

wellness champion network are committed to increasing a culture of wellness and take pride in their roles as wellness liaisons. Success of the wellness champion network is ensured through frequent recognition

and appreciation for their work. In addition, there is extensive outreach to champions in the form of emails, mailings, meetings, and personal interactions with MHealthy regional wellness coordinators.

The University of Michigan has seen positive results from its investment in employee and community health. More specifically, current outcomes include **population-level risk reduction** and a **greater than five percent increase in the number of people at low risk**.



### About StayWell

StayWell is a health engagement company that helps its clients engage and educate people to improve health and business results. StayWell brings decades of experience working across the health care industry to design solutions that address its clients' evolving needs. We fuse expertise in health engagement and the science of behavior change with an integrated portfolio of solutions and robust content assets to effectively engage people to make positive health care decisions. StayWell programs have received numerous top industry honors, including the C. Everett Koop National Health Award and the Web Health Award for health engagement programs. StayWell also has received URAC and NCQA accreditation for several of its programs. StayWell is headquartered in Yardley, Pennsylvania, and also has major locations in Salt Lake City, Utah, and St. Paul., Minnesota. To learn more, visit [staywell.com](http://staywell.com).

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