

Memo To: All UH-Downtown/PS Holders
From: Juan Sánchez Muñoz, President
Subject: Employee Wellness Program Policy

UH-Downtown/PS 02.B.13
Issue No. 6
Effective date: 09/06/2019
Page 1 of 5

1. PURPOSE

In accordance with the [State Employees Health Fitness and Education Act of 1983](#), the University of Houston-Downtown has developed an Employee Wellness Program for the benefit of all employees. This voluntary program of physical fitness activities is designed to improve the health and well-being of employees and reduce or eliminate problems affecting employee health and work productivity.

2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 Eligible Employee: Full-time, benefits-eligible employees.
- 2.2 Fitness Release Time: Employees who are approved to participate in the Employee Wellness Program may be eligible to receive up to thirty (30) minutes, three times per week) of Fitness Release Time (FRT) to participate in a fitness activity offered in the University of Houston-Downtown's Student Life Center (SLC) or other physical fitness activities on campus (i.e., walking, climbing stairs, etc.).
- 2.3 Wellness Leave: The incentive program of up to eight (8) hours of leave to eligible employees who have completed an approved online Health Risk Assessment (HRA) and received an annual comprehensive physical exam.
- 2.4 Health Risk Assessment (HRA): An HRA or health survey is a collection of health-related data which a medical provider can use to evaluate the health status and the health risks of an individual. This information enables a medical provider to provide tailored feedback in an attempt to reduce any risk factors as well as the potential inevitability of the diseases to which they are related.
- 2.5 Comprehensive Physical Exam: A comprehensive physical exam consists of a detailed medical history, physical examination, and age- and sex-appropriate counseling and screening tests. It is a customized exam that includes provision of evidence-based counseling and screening tests based on the patient's health status, risk factors, and personal and family history. The employee may be responsible for some out-of-pocket expenses related to the appointment(s), such as applicable co-pays, additional screenings, etc. It is recommended that employees verify information with their doctor's office and/or insurance carrier to determine what fees may be involved prior to the examination.

3. POLICY

- 3.1 The University of Houston-Downtown's Employee Wellness Program strives to increase the well-being and productivity of all employees, through enhancement of all aspects of health. The program seeks to increase awareness of positive health behaviors, motivate employees to voluntarily adopt healthier behaviors and, provide opportunities and a supportive environment to foster positive lifestyle changes.
- 3.2 The Employee Wellness Program consists of activities that include awareness, lifestyle changes, and a supportive environment to accomplish pre-defined wellness and fitness goals. Depending on availability of funds and personnel support, the activities in each area may include, but are not limited to:
1. Awareness
 - Materials on bulletin boards around campus
 - Informative handouts and brochures
 - One-time events such as Employee Health and Fitness Fair
 - Information available on the HR web site
 - Periodic emails to the University community
 2. Lifestyle Changes
 - Fitness Release Time (FRT)
 - Membership in UHD Sports & Fitness facility
 - Participation in various fitness programs
 - Workshops and seminars coordinated by the Office of Human Resources, Student Health Services, Sports & Fitness and Wellness Committee
 - Guidance through the University's Employee Assistance Program
 3. Supportive Environment
 - An active Safety Committee
 - Continued backing by and collaboration with the University's Staff Council and Wellness Committee
- 3.3 Most educational workshops, seminars, and awareness programs will be offered during lunch and before/after working hours. From time to time, a department may plan an educational workshop for the entire department when it is believed that the activity will improve the productivity of the overall employee group. Managers are encouraged to allow for flexible scheduling to accommodate participation in programs that are offered during lunch breaks, and before or after work.
- 3.4 Fitness Release Time
- 3.4.1 Fitness Release Time (FRT) is available to full-time, benefits-eligible employees.

- 3.4.2 Employees who are approved to participate in the Employee Wellness Program may be eligible to receive up to thirty (30) minutes, three times per week of Fitness Release Time to participate in a fitness activity offered in the University of Houston-Downtown's Student Life Center or other physical fitness activities on campus (i.e., walking, climbing stairs, etc.)
- 3.4.3 The FRT may not interfere with the employee's duties or the department's responsibilities; therefore, supervisor approval is required before the employee may commence and continue this program.
- 3.4.4 FRT is available for a six-month period and may be renewed at the supervisor's discretion. Employees must complete an FRT Application for each FRT period and obtain supervisor approval before commencing any activity under this program.
- 3.4.5 The employee must submit a leave absence request in the Time Reporting and Absence Management (TRAM) system to document his/her FRT.
- 3.4.6 FRT is counted as hours worked but not for the purposes of overtime pay or compensatory time, where applicable.
- 3.4.7 Fitness Release Time cannot be requested in conjunction with the College Release Program. See [PS 02.B.12, Employee Training and Development Policy](#) for details regarding the College Release Program.

3.5 Wellness Leave

- 3.5.1 To encourage UHD employees to be aware of and reduce their health risks, UHD will provide a wellness leave incentive of up to eight (8) hours to employees who complete an online health risk assessment (HRA) and receive an annual comprehensive physical exam.
- 3.5.2 The wellness leave time is available to full-time, benefits-eligible employees once per year.
- 3.5.3 The wellness leave provides eight (8) hours of leave time per year to employees and may be used for any purpose.

4. PROCEDURES

4.1 To request and report Fitness Release Time, the following steps must be followed:

1. Employee completes the [FRT Application](#) requesting up to thirty (30) minutes, three times per week for exercise/physical fitness activities at UHD's Sports & Fitness

facility or other physical fitness activities on campus (i.e., walking, climbing stairs, etc.) and submits it to his/her supervisor;

2. Supervisor approves or denies request. If request is denied, employee may not use Fitness Release Time. If approved, employee completes the Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire ([PAR-Q](#)) Form and submits both forms to the Benefits Office in HR;
 3. If employee answers “Yes” to one or more of the questions on the PAR-Q, employee will be asked to have the Medical Clearance form approved by his/her primary care physician before the Benefits Office approves employee participation in an exercise program or physical fitness activity;
 4. Once all requirements are met, the FRT Application is approved by the Benefits Office, who in turn notifies supervisor. Employee retains copies of the FRT Application and PAR-Q forms for his/her records. The original forms are filed by the Benefits Office.
 5. For each thirty (30) minute FRT session, employees must submit the time off via the Time Reporting and Absence Management (TRAM) system. If the employee elected other physical fitness activities on campus (i.e., walking, climbing stairs, etc.), he/she must attach proof of this activity (i.e. smart phone health application, fitbit, pedometer) showing the date and time.
 6. Supervisor approves FRT time, as long as it does not exceed thirty (30) minutes, three times per week.
 7. FRT records are subject to audit by HR. Failure to adhere to the established guidelines outlined herein may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.
- 4.2 To request up to eight (8) hours of wellness leave time, the following steps must be completed:
1. Employee completes the [Health Risk Assessment and Physician’s Certification of Routine Physical Exam Affidavit](#).
 2. Employee completes and prints the health risk assessment (HRA) completion certificate provided by the current health care and/or insurance provider.
 3. Employee schedules physical exam with doctor’s office using sick leave.
 4. Employee ensures that physician has stamped and signed the “Physician’s Certification of Routine Physical Exam” section of the affidavit.

5. Employee submits the affidavit and certificate of HRA completion (if available) to supervisor for signature.
6. Employee submits the affidavit and certificate of HRA completion (if available) to HR.
7. Employees must request the time off for Wellness Leave via the Time Reporting and Absence Management (TRAM) system. Employees may take the time in two blocks of four (4) or one block of eight (8) hours.

5. REVIEW PROCESS

Responsible Party: (Reviewer): Vice President for Human Resources.

Review: Every three years on or before January 1st.

Signed original on file in the Office of Human Resources

6. POLICY HISTORY

Issue #1: 10/15/07
Issue #2: 01/12/09
Issue #3: 10/10/13
Issue #4: 05/04/17
Issue #5: 08/20/18

7. REFERENCES

[State Employees Health Fitness and Education Act of 1983](#)
[PS 02.B.12, Employee Training and Development Policy](#)