Quest Diagnostics®

Health and well-being programs

An essential safety strategy for today's transportation workforce

Safety culture changed everything, but it's time to change again.

A decades-long focus on transportation safety helped spur advances that improved conditions for workers and the public. But there's more to be done.

Dec 16, 2019

Electronic logging devices required for drivers and carriers[1]

July 18, 2024

NextGen Air Transportation System programs go live[3]

Dec 29, 2020

Positive Train Control technology in operation on 57,536 miles of track[2]

While technology can alert us to impending danger and sometimes even intervene to avoid it, transportation relies on hundreds of thousands of people working in all conditions and hours of the day. That can create fatigue, stress, and burnout that technology can't always overcome. A growing shortage of qualified candidates is also putting less experienced people in control of potentially dangerous equipment, raising the risk even higher.[4] It's time to pair technology with more effective and engaging solutions for the human side of the equation.

Forward-looking safety leaders recognize that a proactive and resilient safety strategy includes placing employee health and well-being at the highest level of their plan. This vital support area helps people perform their best, which can increase productivity and employee satisfaction. And it can also become a competitive advantage in hiring or retaining the most experienced, in-demand workers. **After all, the number 2 reason people switch jobs is for better benefits.**[6]

> **"Safety has to be everyone's responsibility… everyone needs to know that they are empowered to speak up if there's an issue."**
>
> **–Captain Scott Kelly, Astronaut, NASA**[5]

Safety is everything

In transportation, safety is the mandate. The very nature of the business requires the highest standards of care for employees, passengers, equipment, and cargo. Yet, long hours, irregular schedules, and physical and mental demands are at odds with the mandate. In response, organizations have evolved standards, created environments that encourage and support safety, and defined key principles that guide the development and management of safety culture across the industry. Companies may differ in the details, but most emphasize a common set of core values.

At its heart, a culture of safety is about caring for people and giving them the opportunity to make a living without risking the things they hold most dear. But for too long something important has been missing.

Safety culture values

- **Commit to safety**
  Ensure leaders embrace safety and actively champion it
- **Support workers' frontline role**
  Empower everyone to take responsibility for safety
- **Be safety proactive**
  Identify and address potential hazards before incidents occur
- **Train and educate**
  Ensure employees have the latest knowledge and skills
- **Be transparent and communicate well**
  Protect two-way communication for safety concerns
- **Integrate technology and data**
  Continuously improve the ability to monitor, predict, and prevent incidents
- **Balance support with accountability**
  State expectations clearly and enforce them fairly to promote a shared commitment

Health and wellness challenges are part of the job

In a high-stakes, no-compromise industry like transportation, no safety option can be left behind. A strong health and well-being program is uniquely suited to supporting the cause because working conditions often make it difficult for workers to maintain healthy habits. **Just look at the facts about over-the-road (OTR) drivers.**

Compared to other US adult workers, OTR truck drivers have higher rates of heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, and obesity.[7]

Long hours and irregular schedules reduce OTR drivers' sleep duration and quality.[8]

OTR drivers average about 2,500 miles a week, covering about 125,000 miles per year.[9]

OTR trucking has a turnover rate of 90%.[10]

Every employee could benefit from better health and well-being, but perhaps none more than truckers. Because transportation is one of those jobs that creates stress (just-in-time deliveries, weather delays, traffic), health risks (sedentary lifestyle, irregular sleep, diet concerns), and loneliness[11] (extended periods away from family and friends). Scheduling care appointments may be more difficult as OTR drivers are often away for weeks at a time. And with trucking being a male-dominated field (fewer than 10% of professional drivers are female[12]) and men being 50% less likely than women to seek medical help,[13] the industry in general faces disadvantages it really can't afford.

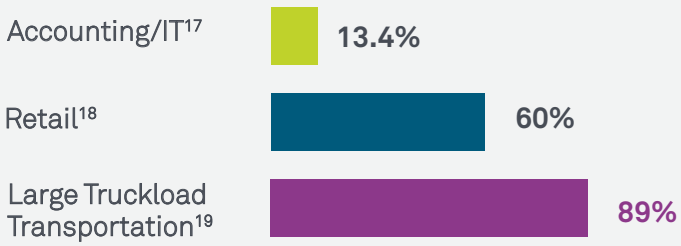
Employees' health affects safety outcomes

- Physical health challenges increase risk of crashes[14]
- Fatigue leads to slower decision-making and higher error rates[15]
- Unmanaged stress can increase workplace hazards[16]

Hiring, retention, and regulatory challenges compound the issue

An aging workforce comes with growing health issues. That's the nature of getting older, regardless of industry or lifestyle. But there's something else at work among professional drivers that needs to be solved.

Selected industries considered to have high turnover rates



89% is a shocking turnover rate for an industry that requires an expensive, time-consuming process to enter it. Not only could the high turnover rate suggest that drivers are unhappy, but it may also cause a potential safety issue. After all, if experienced drivers are exiting the industry—or specific companies— then less experienced drivers are piloting the trucks. Truck driving schools do an admirable job, but as with any skilled endeavor, experience brings improvement. It stands to reason that drivers with millions of miles behind them will be able to handle situations that drivers with mere thousands of miles may struggle with. And anyone who has driven for any length of time can confirm the unexpected can—and will—happen on the road.

Change is constant

Safety culture is continuously evolving. Regulators now seek to include frontline workers in safety decisions, promote data-driven approaches to identify and manage safety risks,[20] and place an emphasis on psychological safety and employee well-being. Organizations that don't integrate these approaches into their operations risk falling behind their competitors or attracting government scrutiny.

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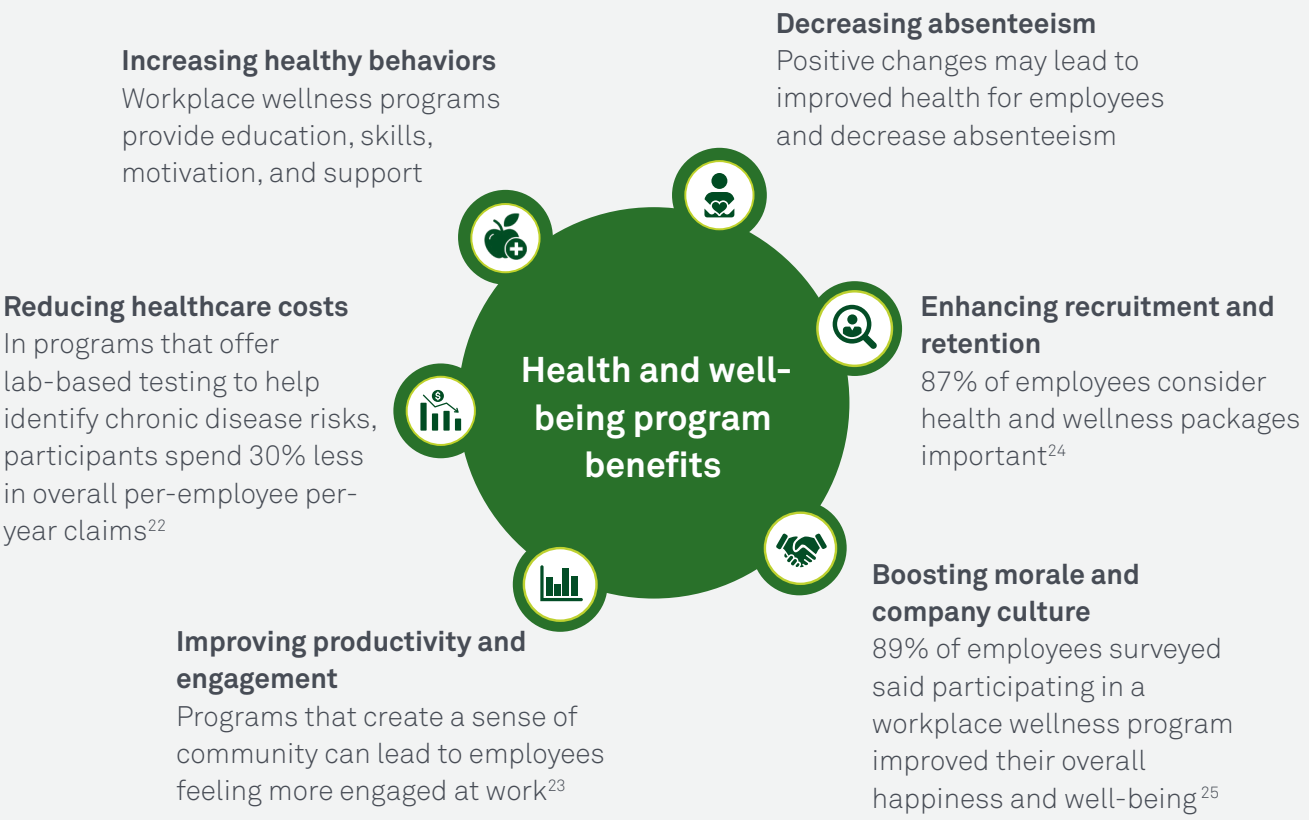
Integrating health and well-being into safety planning: The time has come

Let's give employers—and the industry—the praise they deserve. Transportation safety is much better now than 50 years ago, with fatalities per 100 million truck miles dropping almost 75% from 1975 to 2022.[21] But we can do even better.

By making health and well-being a pillar of their safety strategy, employers can continue to improve safety without risking the advances they've already made—and experience increased employee satisfaction, productivity, and profitability. But don't delay. Those who move first are likely to have an advantage over the late adopters.



Evolving your workplace standards to accrue the benefits of having healthier, happier employees requires a certain amount of rigor. Creating a plan can help safeguard what's already working and help reassure company leaders of the value they can expect. While every company will have unique needs, there are steps that can help guide you to a program you'll be proud of.

Guiding thoughts to develop your plan

☐ Assess existing conditions

- Add health risks to existing assessments
- Evaluate data on absenteeism, incident causes, and employee responses to an expanded set of questions
- Identify areas where health issues (eg, fatigue) contribute to incidents

☐ Survey workers

- Learn what wellness resources would be valued most
- Identify the most popular benefits for your different departments/ job types

☐ Align wellness objectives with safety key performance indicators (KPIs)

- Reducing incidents
- Improving attendance
- Boosting satisfaction

☐ Define specific targets that align health and wellness with safety

- Example: "Decrease fatigue-related incidents by 20% in two years."

☐ Tailor a program to meet your workforce where they are

- Collaborate with employees
- Solicit input from different department/job types

☐ Support priority needs

- Close gaps in access to care with virtual care for remote workers
- Integrate remote health coaching
- Help workers manage chronic conditions while on the move

☐ Implement seamlessly

- Incorporate health and wellness cues into safety protocols
- Integrate mindfulness breaks into preshift briefings
- Support periodic walking/exercise breaks

☐ Make the most of employee communications

- Promote wellness programs with a mix of events and communication types
- Personalize messages to increase their impact

☐ Measure and adapt

- Monitor wellness activity enrollment
- Record effect on safety KPIs
- Solicit employee feedback
- Use data analysis to fine-tune programs

Finding a partner who can help evolve your safety culture

If you're considering partners to help improve your health and well-being offering, there are a few things to avoid and a few to look for.

Things to avoid

Many health and well-being partners deliver narrowly focused products or services to fill a specific need or fill common gaps in employers' existing benefits programs. While this can seem like a good way to flesh out an offering, it can create more problems than it solves.

- **Inbox overload**
  Sending out communications every time you add a benefit risks them being overlooked—and people who don't work at a desk are even less likely to see them
- **Increased analytics effort**
  Having multiple standalone programs delivering their own data makes it difficult to develop a meaningful view of participation and impact
- **Lack of safety mindset**
  Providers without deep safety experience may have difficulty achieving integration and delivering the outcomes you need

Things to look for

Consider partners who can help design and deliver a holistic program that's the right fit for your business and safety culture. Finding one partner who can handle all aspects increases the chances of it being successful for employers and employees alike.

- **Deep understanding of health, well-being, and safety**
  Providers who already know the intricacies of safety can significantly decrease time to launch
- **Breadth of offerings and experience**
  Curating the right solution is easier when your provider offers a broad choice of applicable solutions
- **Integrated employee activation**
  Employees won't engage if they don't understand what's available, why it matters, and how to participate
- **A single set of engagement and usage data**
  Impact and ROI matter for health and well-being programs, so you need data that's complete and easy to access

Health and well-being are critical aspects of your safety strategy. So is picking the right partner to help you design, launch, and manage your program. At Quest Diagnostics, we have extensive experience identifying opportunities to improve health and well-being, coordinating the elements of care to reveal insights that help people live better, and integrating safety into everyday activities. We're ready to help you and your benefits team discover all the advantages of an integrated offering and strategize a plan for its implementation.

To learn more about creating a health, well-being, and safety program that can help you meet the mandate, better support your employees, and provide measurable ROI, visit **QuestDiagnostics.com/Employer or contact WorkforceSolutions@QuestDiagnostics.com**

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