

CITY OF SANTA ROSA  
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL  
FROM: AMY REEVE, DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES  
HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT  
SUBJECT: WELLNESS STUDY SESSION

AGENDA ACTION: WELLNESS STUDY SESSION

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This Study Session will provide an overview of City-wide wellness initiatives and current wellness programs. It will also provide an opportunity for discussion and provide recommendations for further enhancement of available wellness benefits to strengthen our current program and promote physical, mental, and emotional wellness for our workforce.

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#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City has invested in improving its wellness program and tailored it to meet the evolving needs of the organization. This is intended to positively contribute to the well-being of our employees and enhance the traditional health benefits package offered to them, with the goal of supporting, attracting, and retaining a healthy and talented workforce.

This presentation will highlight the variety of wellness resources the City of Santa Rosa offers to supplement the health benefits program for City employees and their families.

#### BACKGROUND

Our organization invests in the overall health and well-being of employees, encouraging employees to participate in health-related activities and providing access to various resources and certified health professionals that can help improve their physical and mental health.

There are several benefits to implementing a company wellness program, which can positively impact both employees and the organization as a whole. Some of the benefits of a company wellness program include:

1. Improved employee health and well-being: Wellness programs can help employees develop healthier habits, such as regular exercise, healthy eating, and stress management, which can lead to better physical and mental health. A

study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that workplace wellness programs can lead to a 25% reduction in health care costs.

2. Increased productivity: When employees are healthy and feel supported, they are more productive at work. A study published in the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine found that workplace wellness programs can lead to a 6% increase in productivity.
3. Lower absenteeism and presenteeism: When employees are healthy and engaged, they are less likely to miss work due to illness or other issues. A study published in the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine found that workplace wellness programs can lead to a 25% reduction in absenteeism and a 40% reduction in presenteeism.
4. Improved employee engagement and retention: Wellness programs can help employees feel valued and supported by their employer, which can lead to increased job satisfaction, engagement, and loyalty. A study by the Society for Human Resource Management found that companies with wellness programs had lower turnover rates than those without.
5. Positive impact on company culture: Wellness programs can create a positive, health-focused culture within the organization, which can improve employee morale and contribute to a more cohesive, productive team.

Data from the Global Wellness Institute estimates that workplace wellness programs are a \$48 billion industry, with an expected growth rate of 5.8% from 2020 to 2027. A study by the International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans found that 84% of organizations surveyed offered some type of wellness program to their employees. Additionally, a survey by the Society for Human Resource Management found that 70% of employees said wellness programs were an important factor in their decision to stay with their employer.

The City's current wellness programs and initiatives offer features that aim to improve an individual's total health, under the guidance of certified professionals, who help encourage our workforce to use wellness to positively impact their health, increasing employee morale and job satisfaction, while optimizing performance and productivity.

## **WELLNESS INITIATIVES**

### Concern EAP:

In August 2020, the City of Santa Rosa made a conscientious decision to use health plan savings to enhance wellness benefits for its employees. Concern EAP was chosen as the new provider for the City-wide Employee Assistance Program (EAP). As a boutique-style EAP provider, the City was able to partner with Concern to enhance the benefits provided to employees. This included a greater number of sessions per situation, an enhanced package of supplemental benefits, and a larger provider network, including specialists with expertise in providing specialized support for police and fire employees.

With the selection of the new provider, the City also provided greater access to care through improved technology, with a phone application tool that can provide the right level of convenient and personalized support at employees' fingertips. Concern offers all-in-one mental health and employee well-being solutions that are convenient for employees and their families. They receive expert guidance for life's unexpected events and have easy access to self-help tools organized by topic with articles, apps, and videos. Some of the topics include Success at Work, Relationships, Emotional Well-being, and Healthy Habits. The resources are easy to access online or by phone, and they are available 24/7.

All services can be accessed through multiple channels, including in-person, via telephone, video, text, or chat and are always kept completely confidential. Concern offers a variety of work/life balance and health resources, including a network of experienced, licensed counselors who can help with stress, depression, anxiety, relationship conflicts, major life changes, substance abuse, communication issues, emotional well-being, anger, grief, loss, job stress, and work conflicts. Experts are also available to provide discounted financial and legal consultation. All benefits through Concern are available to benefit-eligible employees, their spouse or domestic partner, family/household members, and dependent children up to age twenty-six, even while living outside the household.

The enhanced benefits and care provided by Concern have resulted in greater utilization of the EAP benefit. Overall, utilization has increased from 9.6% to 18.8% in the most recent plan year. Concern reported two hundred and ten total new cases and an average number of six new weekly visits. In total, City employees received one hundred seventy-nine counseling sessions and thirty work/life balance sessions.

Between November 2021 and December 2021, there were four onsite support sessions provided to departments that requested trauma or grief support for employees, and at least two additional sessions provided to employees after significant workplace trauma. Concern has critical incident response counselors available to staff after traumatic events or unexpected loss.

#### Concern for First Responders:

As mentioned briefly above, the EAP benefit was specifically enhanced for our First Responder personnel and their families, by introducing a dedicated panel of experienced and specialized providers who are culturally competent, understand the needs and experiences of first responders and how to provide treatment. This plan enhancement allowed first responders to access providers they were previously seeing on an out-of-pocket basis and put them into our plan.

The specialized first responder network supports the specific mental, emotional health, and daily living needs of our safety personnel and their families.

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In the previous year, utilization of the EAP benefit for public safety employees has increased, with seventy-eight total new cases and an average of six new visits per week. There was a 32.37% increase in the utilization of the counseling and work-life case utilization for the Police Department, and a 39.86% increase in the same benefit for Fire department staff and their families.

#### Cordico App for First Responders:

In 2020, as a compliment to Concern, the City invested in the Cordico tool as an additional support network for the Police and Fire Departments. Cordico's program provides safety employees direct access to their peer support group through an application on their cell phone. Nationwide reports confirm that Police and Fire employees overwhelmingly report that job-related stress has affected their mental health. First responders say cultural stigma creates a barrier to getting help for emotional or behavioral issues. Left unaddressed, stress can lead to destructive behaviors and poor decision making, or career burnout.

Cordico's wellness solution addresses these challenges, providing Police and Fire employees, and their family members with confidential, on-demand access to relevant, trusted and effective wellness resources. Self-assessments, videos, guides and courses on more than sixty behavioral health topics are available on the web-based app - all resources are designed specifically for first responders. These resources are proven to improve decision-making, empathy and resiliency, which in turn enhances the relationship between first responders and the community they serve.

#### Wellness Benefit:

During the most recent round of negotiations, the majority of miscellaneous employee bargaining units were granted an annual wellness benefit. This program is intended to promote health and wellness, including both physical and mental fitness, and provides an annual payment of \$500 to each eligible employee. The payment is distributed on the first paycheck of each year in January and can be used to cover expenses related to wellness programs, such as gym memberships, fitness equipment, or weight loss programs, all of which can contribute to enhancing the health and well-being of City staff.

#### Additional Wellness Resources:

A variety of wellness solutions have been offered to City employees through partnerships and initiatives. The City's Training and Development Officer provides monthly Learning Aides to departments, which include talking points and tips on managing stress and improving work/life balance. These guides can be used during morning meetings or all hands discussions to support employees.

Through our partnership with Kaiser Permanente, the HR department receives monthly health newsletters that circulate information on relevant health and wellness topics and perks available to all City employees.

The annual Health and Wellness Fair is also provided, with vendors from health plans and local resources to provide support to employees and their families. Past vendors have included gym and fitness facilities, continuing education providers, financial planning resources, and more. These vendors offer incentives for government employees and provide information on the tools or memberships they can provide.

The City partners with Alliant, our insurance provider, to offer voluntary benefits or enhancements that improve the benefits package offered to employees. We are exploring several items for the next renewal cycle, such as pet insurance, supplemental indemnity insurance (e.g., accident, critical illness, or hospital reimbursement coverage), and legal consultation. Additionally, we plan to enhance the current vision plan and short-term disability coverage and explore an employee perks/discount program.

#### PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

In 2004, the City Council approved the first wellness program and Council has enhanced the wellness program and incentives over the years. Wellness Solutions was introduced as a wellness benefit for Police and Fire, which was expanded for all staff.

Most recently, the introduction of a specific wellness benefit for most miscellaneous groups and Fire employees, supports employee's health and wellness goals outside of the work environment.

#### ANALYSIS

When employees are experiencing stress, poor health, or mental exhaustion, it can negatively impact their overall well-being and lead to absenteeism and decreased productivity at work. By offering a comprehensive benefits package that focuses on employees' physical, mental, and emotional health, the City of Santa Rosa demonstrates its commitment to promoting the well-being of its employees.

Human resources professionals strongly support these types of programs, as there is evidence to suggest that employees feel more supported and engaged, leading to improved absenteeism and potentially lower health care premiums. In fact, Santa Rosa has received lower insurance rates than anticipated due to its positive claims experience during the last insurance renewal. Additionally, there has been a noticeable reduction in workers' compensation injuries, including a decrease in the severity and frequency of certain types of claims.

Investing in wellness programs and benefits is also an effective way to attract and retain employees, particularly in a competitive job market. By prioritizing employee well-being,

the City of Santa Rosa is positioning itself as an employer of choice, which can help to ensure that it has a strong and engaged workforce.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no new fiscal impact. Earlier budget cycles appropriated the funds that support the current wellness benefits.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

None

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Not applicable.

NOTIFICATION

Not applicable.

ATTACHMENTS

- Presentation

CONTACT

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