



[back to Content Outline](#)

[next item](#)

Dedication

This

ARKANSAS **f**itness *Challenge*

Employee Fitness Contest Kit

was developed by the Arkansas Department of Health and Arkansas Blue Cross and Blue Shield as a gift to the Honorable Mike Huckabee, Governor of Arkansas, in support of the Healthy Arkansas initiative and to Arkansas companies/organizations to encourage worksite wellness initiatives — all in an effort to improve the health of Arkansans.



Healthy Arkansas

For a Better State of Health

Employee Fitness Contest Kit

© 2004 Arkansas Blue Cross and Blue Shield

PRESENTED BY ARKANSAS BLUE CROSS AND BLUE SHIELD AND THE ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH





Introduction & Executive Summary

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the following most recent statistics are reflective of the Arkansas population:

- Arkansas is 47th in State Health Rankings (2003).
- 61 percent of adult Arkansans are overweight/obese.
- 79 percent don't eat five fruit/vegetable servings daily.
- 29 percent do not engage in leisure time physical activity.

People spend almost 45 percent of waking hours in the workplace. Through worksite wellness programs, the employer has the opportunity to:

- Reinforce/maintain healthy lifestyle efforts and encourage employees to take an active role in their personal health.
- Reduce health-care costs.
- Reduce short-term sick leave.
- Increase productivity.

History

The Arkansas Department of Health established the Cardiovascular Task Force to develop a state plan to improve cardiovascular health in Arkansas. Arkansas Blue Cross and Blue Shield was asked to be one of the collaborators on the task force.

The idea for the Arkansas Fitness Challenge began during that collaboration. Four factors affecting heart disease — obesity, nutrition, smoking and physical inactivity — are among the biggest health threats faced by people (including Arkansans) in the 21st Century. These factors — factors within a person's control — are being addressed in detail by the Cardiovascular Task Force's long-term plan.

In the interim, the two entities began working together to create a fun program for helping their employees increase their physical activity, and subsequently, begin to address weight loss and management.

Thus, the first Arkansas Fitness Challenge came into being. The Arkansas Fitness

Challenge is a contest during which employees from opposing teams — in this instance, the Arkansas Department of Health and Arkansas Blue Cross and Blue Shield — participate in eligible exercises (cardiovascular focused) for a three-month time period. Measurements are established and given a point value at the beginning of the contest, then recorded throughout the competition. At the end of the contest, a winning team is named, based on accumulated points.

What was at stake? Bragging rights ... but most importantly, better health.

The first Arkansas Fitness Challenge also served as a pilot program to encourage other companies and organizations statewide to participate in future observances of the Arkansas Fitness Challenge and/or create their own Employee Fitness Contests ... and practice worksite wellness activities throughout the year.

Contest Goals

The goals of the Arkansas Fitness Challenge were to:

- Increase physical activity among employees by:
 - Engaging non-exercising employees in consistent exercise in eligible categories for 30 minutes at least three times per week, and
 - Engaging already exercising employees to exercise in eligible categories 30 minutes daily.
- Begin to reduce incidence of obesity among employees.
- Encourage other employers and Arkansans to join in the effort by profiling contest in the media and in a Kit for employer groups.





Concept

A virtual tour of Arkansas cities was used as the structure for the contest. The concept was to have employees exercise along a virtual Arkansas route through 30 checkpoints, advancing to the next checkpoint by satisfying one 30-minute exercise requirement (daily). To stay on track and successfully complete the program in a three-month period (March through May), the employee was required to advance one checkpoint at least three times per week for 10 of the almost 14 weeks. Exercising 30 minutes a day allowed the employee to advance to the next checkpoint. The 30-minute exercise session could be completed in one segment, two 15-minute or three 10-minute segments within one day. The exercises designated for the contest were of an aerobic/cardiovascular type and included walking, running/jogging, swimming/water aerobics, bicycling, aerobics, aerobic machines, and court sports.

Measures

The measures agreed upon at the onset of the first Arkansas Fitness Challenge contest and used to determine the winner of the contest were:

- Highest percentage of employees completing the 30-checkpoint route — 35 eligible points.
- Highest average of most days exercised per week — 35 eligible points.
- Highest percentage of employees participating — 20 eligible points.
- Lowest dropout rate — 10 eligible points.

Contest Structure

The contents of this Employee Fitness Contest Kit are designed to assist any organization/company in conducting an Employee Fitness Contest or starting other worksite wellness initiatives. The following elements are contained in this Kit:

- Planning, promotion, registration and exercise tracking processes developed in the pilot.
- Web and paper tools for registration, promotion and reporting.
- Other Worksite Wellness tools/Web resources.
- Detailed evaluation results.
- Timelines.
- Sample communication tools (e-mail, newsletter articles, media alerts, etc.).
- Fitness Fair sample structure.



[back to Content Outline](#)

[next item](#)

Evaluation

All participants of the first Arkansas Fitness Challenge contest were asked to complete an evaluation of the program. Of the 2,690 participants in the contest, 841 responded (a 31 percent sample). Highlights of the evaluation results are summarized here, with more detail provided in the **Evaluation Section** of this Kit:

- 80 percent of respondents indicated that their health had somewhat or greatly improved during the contest.
- Highest motivating factors to begin and continue the contest: Company Leadership and Peer Encouragement.
- Number of days respondents exercised per week increased from 0-1 day per week at the beginning of the contest to 3-5 days per week at the end of the contest.
- Many respondents reported they lowered blood pressure, cholesterol, weight and blood sugar during the contest.
- 98 percent of respondents indicated they would participate in future programs like the Arkansas Fitness Challenge.

The Arkansas Fitness Challenge was a great success, with many employees continuing to exercise and track progress at both entities after the official end of the contest. Among the most successful strategies were:

- Utilizing existing events, such as the Komen Race For The Cure®, American Heart Association Heart Walks, American Cancer Society Relay for Life events, March of Dimes walks, etc., as exercise opportunities — a “win-win” for the contest participants and charitable organizations.
- Reporting progress to participants frequently.
- Designating regional champions.
- Using community resources such as the American Heart Association for educational information and assistance with Fitness Fairs.

Invitation

The contest will be held on an annual basis (March through May), with other companies and organizations in the state invited to join the contest each year by challenging others in their communities or within their own entities.

This Employee Fitness Contest Kit is designed to be a tool to help you in that pursuit.

Not every tool in this Kit is expected (or even appropriate) to be used by all companies conducting an Employee Fitness Contest. These are simply some of the strategies and samples used in the first Arkansas Fitness Challenge by the Arkansas Department of Health and Arkansas Blue Cross and Blue Shield. Feel free to use any you think might work for you.

For questions regarding the contest, you may contact Becky Fortenbury at Arkansas Blue Cross, (501) 378-3154, or the Arkansas Department of Health’s Healthy Arkansas Worksite Wellness program at, toll-free, 1-800-235-0002.