

HealthyNYC Guide for Employers



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HealthyNYC is New York City’s **vision** for how to increase life expectancy and create a healthier city for all. By 2030, we aim to raise life expectancy to at least 83 years, which will be NYC’s highest recorded life expectancy to date. To achieve this, we set forth ambitious goals to improve health outcomes across seven key drivers of loss in life expectancy. Making improvements in these areas will ensure that all New Yorkers have the chance to live the healthiest, longest life possible.

Employers play a critical role in helping us reach these ambitious goals. They provide health insurance and benefits, set workplace culture, and drive economic systems – all of which shape people’s health. Employers also provide benefits for dependents, impacting the health and well-being of millions of people outside the workforce, such as children and older adults. Employers benefit from investing in the health of their employees, as increased physical and mental health is **associated** with improved productivity, reduced absenteeism and less staff turnover. This guide outlines evidence-based actions that employers can take to help realize HealthyNYC’s vision, including recommendations for each of the seven key drivers and for crosscutting issues, such as economic equity and climate change, as well as links to additional resources.

Actions Employers Can Take



Chronic and Diet-Related Diseases: Cardiometabolic Conditions and Screenable Cancers

Chronic and diet-related diseases, such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and screenable cancers, continue to be leading causes of death across all racial and ethnic groups in NYC. There is also a racial disparity in these deaths across NYC, with Black New Yorkers having the highest rate of deaths related to heart disease and diabetes. Our goal is to decrease cardiovascular disease and diabetes-related deaths by 5% and screenable cancer deaths by 20% by 2030.

What Employers Can Do:

- Promote screening:
 - Create opportunities for employees to get screened for chronic and diet-related diseases at work and get connected to care. Raise awareness of coverage for screening and care under employees' health insurance. (Visit nyc.gov/health and search for **Type 2 Diabetes** and **Heart Disease**.)
 - Raise awareness of the need for cancer screenings and improve coverage for screening and care under employees' health insurance. (Visit nyc.gov/health and search for **Type 2 Diabetes**, **Heart Disease** and **Cancer Prevention and Screening**.)
 - Offer paid time off for employees to get screened for cancer.
- Promote healthy eating:
 - Implement workplace policies that promote healthier eating, such as requirements around reducing added salt and sugar for food served on-site. Explain these policies to employees to support them in implementing similar practices in their homes. (Visit nyc.gov/health and search for **Nutrition Tips**.)
 - Consider adopting the **NYC Food and Beverage Guidelines for Meetings and Events** and additional NYC recommendations, such as vending and cafeteria policies, to create a healthier food environment. (Visit nyc.gov/health and search for **Nutrition: At Work and in City Facilities**.)
 - Build campaigns around **healthy eating**, which can include information, workplace programming on nutrition and cooking, and agricultural cooperative food boxes.
 - Use the NYC Health Department's presentations, handouts and recipes to support workshops. (Visit nyc.gov/health and search for **Nutrition Education Programs and Resources**.)

- Promote physical activity:
 - Offer free classes or access to wellness programs or gyms, and consider challenges and incentives around physical activity. (Visit [nyc.gov](https://www.nyc.gov) and search for **Move More Physical Activity**.)
- Encourage reduction of tobacco use and limit secondhand smoke exposure:
 - Know which tobacco treatment options and supports are offered through your organization's health benefits.
 - Provide information and promote tobacco treatment resources to all employees who smoke to help them reach their goals, regardless of readiness to quit. (Visit [nyc.gov/nycquits](https://www.nyc.gov/nycquits).)
 - Equip employees with materials and resources that they and young dependents can use to prevent, identify and treat tobacco, e-cigarette or alternative product use. (Visit [nyc.gov/health](https://www.nyc.gov/health) and search for **E-cigarettes**.)
 - Ensure that implementation of tobacco-free workplace policies follows best practices. (Visit [tobaccofree-nys.org](https://www.tobaccofree-nys.org) and search for **Tobacco-Free Workplace Policy Guide**.)
 - Consider working with human resources and motivated staff members to develop and launch tobacco-free initiatives, such as incorporating tobacco cessation into existing employee wellness initiatives or creating a peer support network.



Drug Overdose

Drug-related causes of death, including opioid overdose, were one of the top drivers of decreased life expectancy from 2019 to 2021. Drug overdose deaths in NYC have increased by more than 75% since 2019. Our goal is to reduce overdose deaths by 25% by 2030.

What Employers Can Do:

- Provide information, anonymous screening, counseling and connections to substance use treatment programs to make care accessible. (Visit nyc.gov/health and search for **Alcohol and Drug Use Services**.)
- Make naloxone freely available in the workplace and train employees on its use. (Visit nyc.gov/health and search for **Naloxone**.)
- Promote access to anonymous substance use support groups. Create spaces where employees can share their recovery stories in a supportive environment, such as during **National Recovery Month**, to break down stigma and encourage others to seek help.
- Ensure employees know that people who disclose substance use will have appropriate formal protections from unintended consequences.
- Promote alcohol-free after-work socializing events to foster an inclusive and supportive environment for those who choose not to consume alcohol, including employees recovering from substance use disorders. (Visit samhsa.gov/workplace.)
- Adhere to laws, such as the Family and Medical Leave Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, Civil Rights Act and National Labor Relations Act, to support employees with previous or current substance use disorders. (Visit samhsa.gov and search for **Federal Laws and Regulations** or visit nyc.gov/cchr).
- Adopt inclusive hiring practices, including the fair consideration of applicants with previous drug convictions, to counteract employment barriers caused by historical drug enforcement policies. (Visit uprootingthedrugwar.org/employment for recommendations for inclusive hiring practices.)

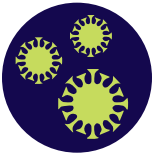


Suicide

Suicide deaths have remained high in NYC every year since 2015. Of particular concern is the increasing rate of suicidal ideation among teenagers, LGBTQIA+ people and communities of color. Our goal is to decrease suicide deaths by 10% by 2030.

What Employers Can Do:

- Ensure that all employees are aware of the NYC 988 suicide and crisis lifeline and understand that help is available to them if they are experiencing a crisis. (Visit nyc.gov/988 for more information. People who need mental health or substance use support or who are in crisis can call 988 directly.)
- Provide information, anonymous mental health screenings, counseling and connections to care to make treatment more accessible. (Visit nyc.gov/health and search for **Suicide Prevention**.)
- Promote access to anonymous mental health support groups. Create spaces where employees can share their recovery stories in a supportive environment, such as during **National Recovery Month**, to break down stigma and encourage others to seek help.
- Provide high-quality insurance benefits with robust network adequacy and competitive reimbursement for mental health and substance use disorder services so employees can receive appropriate quality care.
- Focus on preventive measures and create a **mental health safety plan** at the individual and organizational levels. For example, recognize unhealthy work culture or unjust employer-employee or staff dynamics that can cause distress, and provide toolkits on how to address these issues. (Visit sprc.org/online-library/stanley-brown-safety-plan.)
- Build a workplace mental health program following the **Mental Health Coalition's Framework for Workplace Mental Health**. (Visit thementalhealthcoalition.org/wellbeing.)



COVID-19 and Seasonal Respiratory Illnesses

More than 20,400 New Yorkers died from COVID-19 in 2020, followed by more than 7,700 in 2021. Age-adjusted COVID-19 death rates in 2020 were roughly twice as high among Black and Latino New Yorkers compared with white and Asian New Yorkers. Our goal is to decrease COVID-19 deaths by 60% by 2030 while also addressing the seasonal respiratory illnesses New Yorkers continue to face, such as the flu and RSV (respiratory syncytial virus).

What Employers Can Do:

- Send reminders to employees to get vaccinated, create opportunities to get vaccinated on-site or nearby, and provide incentives for vaccination, such as an extra hour of paid leave. (See the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s [CDC] [Respiratory Virus Guidance](#) webpage and the NYC Health Department’s [COVID-19: Vaccine](#) and [Seasonal Flu](#) webpages.)
- Offer and promote more generous sick leave and family leave so employees can stay home when they or members of their household are sick with respiratory viruses. Remind employees about sick leave policies and encourage appropriate use when experiencing possible symptoms of respiratory illnesses to avoid transmission. (See New York State’s [NYS] [Paid Leave for COVID-19](#) webpage.)
- Create organization-wide cultural norms that make people feel comfortable wearing masks at work. Remind employees that they should wear a mask when feeling sick, and while at work for 5 days after leaving isolation for a respiratory illness with symptoms or for 5 days after positive test date if they had no symptoms. (See the CDC’s [Precautions When Sick](#) webpage or the NYC Health Department’s [COVID-19](#) webpage.)
- Make COVID-19 test kits and masks available to employees and promote awareness of health insurance coverage of vaccines and treatments for respiratory illnesses.
- Place [handwashing signs](#) and reminders in pantry areas and bathrooms.
- Improve indoor air quality and ventilation by removing or reducing pollutant sources and regularly bringing in fresh clean air from outside. Air filters and portable air cleaners can also help improve air quality when used together with air pollutant control and ventilation.



Violence

Violence is the leading cause of death among New Yorkers age 15 to 24, with firearms accounting for more than 70% of those deaths. Homicides increased more than 59% from 2019 to 2021. Employers have a role in preventing violence through their investment in youth and young adults in the communities they serve. They also protect and support their employees and their employees' dependents, especially in matters related to intimate partner and dating violence. They can also act to prevent incidents of violence in the workplace. Our goal is to reduce homicide deaths by 30% by 2030, with attention to all forms of violence.

What Employers Can Do:

- Invest in communities:
 - Create opportunities for young people to work with your company to gain skills and pay. Focus on engaging young people from neighborhoods and backgrounds that have faced the greatest levels of historic disinvestment.
 - Fund after-school and other youth development and engagement activities, with an emphasis on racial equity and justice, as part of corporate social responsibility efforts. (Visit nyc.gov/health and search for **Violence: A Health Issue**.)
- Support employees and their dependents:
 - Support awareness of and promote access to resources for domestic and gender-based violence. (See the NYC Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence's **GET HELP** webpage at nyc.gov/site/ocdv/.)
 - Follow guidelines similar to NYC's workplace policies that provide trauma-informed support for NYC employees experiencing domestic and gender-based violence. (See the NYC Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence's **NYC New Domestic and GBV Workplace Policy** webpage.)
 - Follow best practices in workplace violence prevention, including ensuring employees are aware of relevant policies and receive training. (See the NYS **Workplace Violence Prevention Information** webpage at dol.ny.gov/workplace-safety.)
 - Promote access to employee assistance programs or other mental health supports as a resource if someone has experienced or been exposed to violence.



Maternal Health

Maternal health is central to the long-term health and well-being of birthing people and their children. Through decades of investment, maternal mortality has become increasingly rare in NYC, but extreme racial disparities persist: Black women are four times more likely than white women to die from pregnancy-associated causes. Our goal is to reduce maternal death rates among Black women and birthing people by 10% by 2030.

What Employers Can Do:

- Cover comprehensive parental care benefits that attend to the whole person. Implement awareness campaigns so employees know the full range of services they are entitled to, including community-based doulas and mental health and addiction treatment. (See the Alliance of Community Health Plans' [Advocate for and Invest in Maternal Health Equity](#) at nationalpartnership.org/raisingthebar.)
- Provide reasonable accommodations for employees who are pregnant, recently gave birth or have a medical condition related to pregnancy, per NYC law, such as adjustments to uniform requirements, more frequent breaks, adjustments of start or end times, or a reduced or modified work schedule. (See [NYC Commission on Human Rights guidance](#) by visiting nyc.gov/health and searching for [Pregnancy Legal Guidance](#).)
- Ensure all employees have paid family leave, per NYS law. Paid parental leave policies should have inclusive definitions of families and workers, adequately reimburse workers' wages, provide at least 12 weeks of leave, ensure job protection for workers taking leave and be funded and implemented in a way that advances equity. Employers should conduct regular outreach to employees to communicate their options. NYS provides resources for employers on their responsibilities as related to paid family leave. (See Child Trends' [Recommendations for Creating Equitable and Inclusive Paid Family Leave Policies](#) by visiting childtrends.org and searching for [Recommendations for Equitable Leave](#) and the NYS [Employer Responsibilities and Resources](#) at paidfamilyleave.ny.gov/employer-responsibilities-and-resources.)
- Provide access to support groups and wellness programs tailored to the health and social well-being of birthing people and their families. Providing paid time off for preventive health appointments, child care and mental health is critical for ensuring birthing people and new parents can thrive.
- Provide employees with required lactation accommodations, including a lactation room where employees can pump or express breast milk, and reasonable time to pump or express breast milk. The NYC Commission on Human Rights has developed [several model lactation accommodation policies](#) and a request form. (Visit nyc.gov/cchr and search for [Lactation Local Law 185](#).)

- Cover comprehensive sexual and reproductive health benefits that enable all employees to have the resources they need for making choices about pregnancy and parenting. Benefits should include access to abortion care and fertility care. Employers should be aware of the sexual and reproductive health care rights that people in NYC have. (See the [NYC Sexual and Reproductive Health Care Bill of Rights](#) by visiting [nyc.gov](#) and searching for [Sexual and Reproductive Bill of Rights](#).)
- Create a workplace that fosters gender equity, allowing all employees to make their own reproductive and health choices without shame or fear of losing financial stability. The NYC Human Rights Law makes it unlawful to refuse to hire, refuse to promote or fire a person because of a person’s actual or perceived gender, including being or being perceived to be transgender, nonbinary or gender-nonconforming. (See the NYC Commission on Human Rights’ [Gender Identity and Expression: Legal Enforcement Guidance](#) webpage.)

Crosscutting Factors

Some issues affect all areas of health, such as mental health, social and economic factors, and climate change. They shape communities, health-related behaviors and access to resources that impact multiple health outcomes. Employer action on these crosscutting factors can address several HealthyNYC drivers at once.

Workplace Well-Being

Workplace culture and policies can impact the well-being of employees and their families. Safe, supportive environments have been linked to both better productivity and better health. Employers can integrate the latest research on workplace well-being to ensure that they promote the health of their employees.

What Employers Can Do:

- Train managers on strategies for promoting well-being in the workplace and center these practices as a priority for the organization. Integrate survey findings and employee feedback to create a cycle of continuous learning and improvement. (See the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health's **Total Worker Health** webpages by visiting [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) and searching for **Total Worker Health**.)
- Implement equity-promoting and family-supporting policies and practices across your company. (See the Alliance of Community Health Plans' **The Opportunity Health Plans Have To Advance Equity As Employers** at nationalpartnership.org/raisingthebar.)
- Provide comprehensive physical and mental health insurance to all employees. Small businesses can learn more about how to provide health insurance by visiting the NYC Human Resources Administration Office of Citywide Health Insurance Access at nyc.gov/ochia and searching for **Small Businesses**. If you do not provide health insurance to your employees, encourage them to read more about how to enroll in insurance. (Visit nyc.gov/health/healthcoverage for more information. People looking for health insurance enrollment assistance can call **311** or 347-665-0214 directly or text COVEREDNYC to 55676.)

Factors Related to Structural Racism

Inequities in housing, nutrition, economic opportunity and access to health care are the result of structural racism and discriminatory policies and practices experienced across generations. These systems benefit some communities while harming others. Harm compounds over time and generations, resulting in poorer health outcomes for those affected.

What Employers Can Do:

- Set equity goals to guide hiring and compensation decisions and ensure that the company has in place the mentorship and DEIAB (diversity, equity, inclusion, access and belonging) policies necessary for all employees to thrive.

- Consider how to leverage procurement, investments, partnerships and other activities to further advance economic equity in NYC.
- Support policy changes at all levels of government that more equitably invest resources to advance economic equity.
- Promote access to primary care, encourage employees to get screened for social determinants of health and facilitate connections to relevant resources.

Climate Change

Climate change must be addressed to achieve healthier, longer lives. Climate change acts as a threat multiplier. It worsens existing health threats, including HealthyNYC’s seven key drivers of loss in life expectancy. Each summer in NYC, on average, an estimated 350 people die prematurely due to hot weather and more than 650 are hospitalized with heat stress. Climate change is also supercharging hurricanes, flooding and other extreme weather events, which are dangerous to health.

Employers play a critical role in keeping their employees safe during climate events. They also can contribute to climate action by reducing their greenhouse gas emissions. Doing so not only helps the city reach its climate targets but also helps improve local air pollution created by burning fossil fuels. Employers can also model responsible energy use as part of their sustainability efforts.

What Employers Can Do:

- Set science-based, credible and transparent climate action targets that align with the City’s goal to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, including interim emissions reduction targets and accountability measures.
- Take actions to comply with Local Law 97 to meet building emissions limits and work toward electrification. Buildings are responsible for more than two-thirds of NYC greenhouse gas emissions.
- Develop a heat illness prevention program to protect workers from heat-related occupational hazards. Remember: water, rest and shade. (See the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration’s [Heat Illness Prevention](https://www.osha.gov/heat/employer-responsibility) webpage at [osha.gov/heat/employer-responsibility](https://www.osha.gov/heat/employer-responsibility).)
- Use energy responsibly to protect the energy grid and reduce air pollution. For example, in the summer, set office thermostats to “low cool” or 78 degrees Fahrenheit (25.6 degrees Celsius).
- Model and promote individual climate-supportive behaviors, such as composting, recycling and sustainable commuting.
- Provide information to employees related to climate health and what they can do to protect themselves and their communities. Encourage all New Yorkers to check on friends, family and neighbors during climate events.

Additional Resources for Employers

The NYC Health Department has resource pages for the key drivers, as follows:

- **Heart Disease** – nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/heart-disease.page
- **Diabetes** – nyc.gov/health/diabetes
- **Cancer Prevention and Screening** – nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/cancer-prevention.page
- **Prevent Overdose** – nyc.gov/alcoholanddrugs
- **Suicide Prevention** – nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/suicide-prevention.page
- **COVID-19** – nyc.gov/coronavirus
- **Violence: A Health Issue** – nyc.gov/site/doh/health/neighborhood-health/anti-violence.page
- **Maternal Mortality and Severe Maternal Morbidity Surveillance** – nyc.gov/site/doh/data/data-sets/maternal-morbidity-mortality-surveillance.page

The Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion offers a range of evidence-based resources as part of Healthy People 2030, organized by topic. (Visit health.gov/healthypeople/tools-action/browse-evidence-based-resources.)

The CDC has a Workplace Health Resource Center, a “one-stop shop for workplace health promotion that gives employers resources to create a healthy work environment.” (Visit cdc.gov and search for [workplace health resource center](#).)

The CDC also offers Work@Health, a specific training program for employers on advancing health. (See the CDC’s [Work@Health Program](#) webpage by visiting cdc.gov and searching for [work health program](#).)

The U.S. Surgeon General provides a [framework](#) for advancing workplace mental health and well-being that explains key ideas and offers case studies, as well as a [bank of resources](#). (Visit hhs.gov and search for [Workplace Mental Health and Well-Being](#).)

The World Health Organization offers guidance for employers on designing workplaces that [prevent disease](#) and [promote mental health](#). (Visit who.int and search for [Preventing Disease Through a Healthier Workplace](#) and [Guidelines on Mental Health](#).)

The Commonwealth Fund provides a [resource](#) on how health insurers can better advance health equity, which may be useful for employers when considering insurers. (Visit commonwealthfund.org and search for [How Insurers Can Advance Health Equity](#).)

The Northeast Business Group on Health offers [resources](#) for employers focused on specific health initiatives, such as chronic diseases and vaccinations. (Visit nebgh.org/initiative.)

The Environmental Protection Agency houses a [Center for Corporate Climate Leadership](#) that “serves as a resource center for all organizations looking to expand their work in the area of greenhouse gas measurement and management.” (Visit epa.gov/climateleadership for more information.)



To learn more about HealthyNYC, [read the full report](#) on the key drivers, or [become a HealthyNYC Champion or Supporter](#), visit nyc.gov/healthnyc or scan the QR code.

