

Wellness Program

Illinois Housing Development Authority
Management Innovation: Human Resources

HFA Staff Contact

Andrew Field

afield@ihda.org

"Well Within Reach: Investing in Wellbeing, Inspiring Public Service"

At the intersection of public mission and innovative workplace culture, the Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA), a state agency tasked with financing the creation and the preservation of affordable housing throughout the state, launched a quiet revolution in employee wellness.

It began in 2021 during the pandemic with a simple observation: burnout was on the rise and productivity was falling. Internal surveys revealed something more concerning, employees felt disconnected not only from each other, but from their own health and well-being. The Human Resources Department at IHDA immediately took note and took action. What followed was the creation of comprehensive wellness program aimed at restoring balance, promoting mental and physical health, and nurturing a culture of care.

A Holistic Approach to Wellness

Unlike one-size-fits-all models, IHDA's program was tailored to reflect the diverse roles and needs across the agency, from the assets managers and physical inspectors out in the field to compliance analysts working behind glowing monitors. The program emphasized four pillars:

- **Physical Wellness;**
- **Mental Resilience;**
- **Community Connection;** and
- **Professional Purpose.**

Every employee was encouraged to complete a personalized, holistic "wellness journey" with support from various sources and online wellness coaches. Some of the offerings in the journey include: voluntary biometric screenings, virtual and on-site yoga, monthly wellness lunch and learns, a wellness app for tracking activity and earning wellness rewards, fitness club discounts and reimbursements, and in-house meditation room made participation accessible and flexible in addition to making improvements in their work-lives as well as personal.

Voices from Within

For Sabina Younis, IHDA's Assistant Director of Operational Excellence, as a practicing Muslim, finding a place in the office to pray was burdensome. "Before IHDA provided the meditation room, I often had to find a spot in an empty conference room, which was sometimes distracting because I worried about someone walking in on me. The meditation room offers a peaceful environment free from distractions. My prayers are much more relaxing there, helping me recharge so I can return to work with greater clarity. I am grateful to IHDA for providing such a wonderful space!"

Desiree Hall, a Compliance Analyst in IHDA’s Asset Management Department, found the wellness program helped improve her health both at work and at home, “I have been a part of IHDA’s wellness program since it started, and I absolutely love the program. I’m a big, big fan of IHDA’s wellness program. Let me tell you why. The wellness program has helped me make healthier food decisions by providing fun ways to eat healthier. The program offers various webinars from financial, to cooking classes, selecting fruits and vegetables, meditations, exercises and the list goes on. I have incorporated some of the cooking classes, the fruit and vegetables that I would not normally eat, expanding my choice of exercises, and mediating. The wellness programs also offer various challenges which I’m a huge fan of because the challenges keep me motivated. Here are just a few of the challenges that I’ve participated in: exercises, sleep, meditations, water intake, fruit and vegetable intake.”

From Initiative to Identity

By the end of the first year, job satisfaction scores rose across all departments. More importantly, the wellness program transformed the way employees talked about work. The term “self-care” became part of daily conversations, and supervisors were trained to recognize signs of burnout and compassion fatigue.

To institutionalize the program, IHDA established a wellness team that is composed of human resources staff as well as staff volunteers at all levels. The wellness team review participation metrics, propose new initiatives, and ensure the program remains responsive to emerging needs.

A Model for Others

“IHDA’s strength has always been our people,” said Karri Kartes, IHDA’s Director of Human Resources. “Investing in their well-being isn’t just good ethics, it’s smart governance.” At IHDA, we’re committed to building strong communities and that begins with supporting the well-being of the people who make our mission possible: *our employees*.

The IHDA wellness program is an outstanding initiative that reflects a deep commitment to the health and well-being of all employees. By focusing on key pillars of fitness, nutrition, mindfulness, and financial health, this program supports a truly holistic approach to personal wellness.

What makes this initiative especially commendable is the tangible support provided to employees, from reimbursement for fitness memberships to quarterly incentives that reward healthy choices. Live events such as stress screenings, virtual chair yoga, and app orientations further enhance accessibility and engagement. Plus, the availability of dedicated wellness resources like the Employee Meditation Room and digital health services for BCBSIL members

ensures that support is always within reach. By prioritizing both mental and physical health in such a comprehensive manner, IHDA is empowering its team to thrive both inside and outside the workplace.

We're excited to share our wellness program that is designed to help employees feel their best: physically, mentally, and emotionally. Whether they're looking to manage stress, stay active, or simply carve out time for self-care, the wellness program is here to support them every step of the way.

Why model the IHDA wellness program?

- ✔ Tailored resources for mind and body
- ✔ Supportive, inclusive community
- ✔ Expert-led sessions and activities
- ✔ Tools to help you thrive — at work and beyond

When we invest in our well-being, we strengthen our impact, both professionally and personally.

Let's walk the wellness journey together. Your health matters — and it starts here.

IHDA Wellness Program

Empowering Health in 2025





Fitness

Engaging in regular exercise promotes overall health and well-being for everyone.



Nutrition

Balanced diets help improve energy levels and support a healthy lifestyle.



Mindfulness

Practicing mindfulness reduces stress and enhances emotional resilience in daily life.



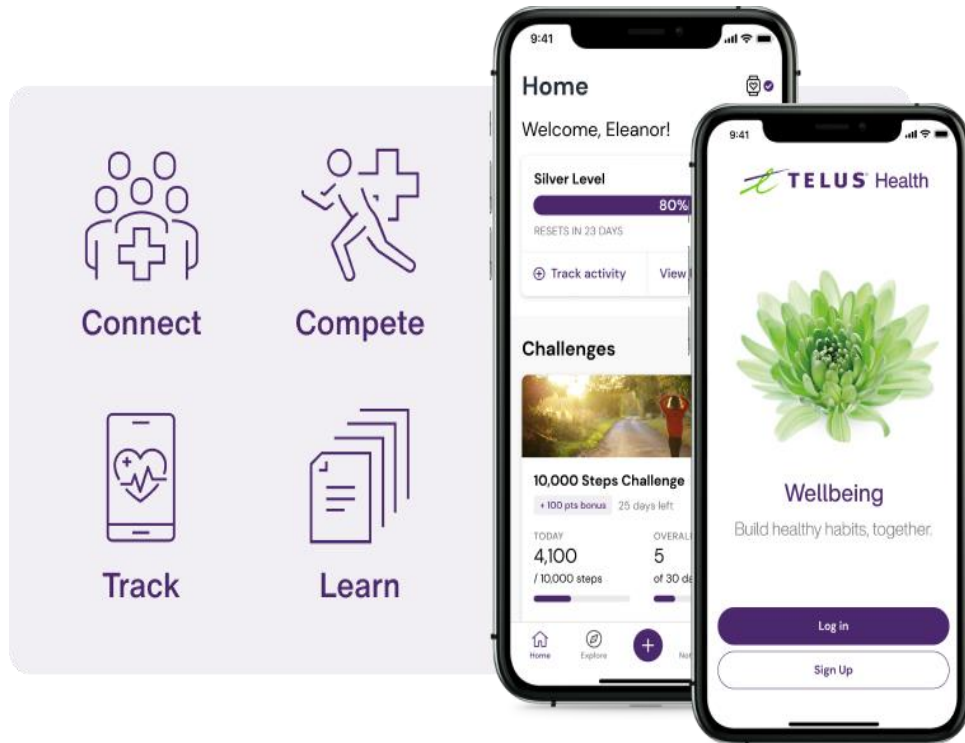
Financial

Understanding finances contributes to overall wellness



Enrollment Process

- **Wellness Club:** To be eligible for the 2025 Wellness prizes, you must be enrolled in the Wellness Club.
- **Registration:** To enroll in the wellness club, you must register via the **TELUS Health Wellbeing Platform**. Please see link to sign up: <https://ihda.wellbeing.telushealth.com/>



Wellness Tracking Portal ****NEW****

[TELUS Health Wellbeing](#) is a fun and interactive platform designed to help you build and maintain a healthy lifestyle, wherever you may be on your wellbeing journey. It allows you to:

- **Set personal goals** and track your activity to help build and keep healthy habits
- **Connect** with colleagues by sharing tips, ideas, and photos in interest-based communities
- **Learn** how to improve your physical, mental, and dietary health through articles and videos
- **Earn rewards** for tracking all kinds of healthy activities



CHIRO ONE PRESENTS:

BE WELL

Appreciation Day

PLEASE JOIN US FOR A DAY OF WELLNESS AND APPRECIATION

Wellness Event

Come enjoy:

- Stress Awareness Screenings and Tips on Stretches to help reduce stress.
- Wellness information from Chiro One's health experts.
- Educational, Visual Posture checks

Date: March 5, 2025

Time: 10:30 AM-12:30PM

Place: Glass House III

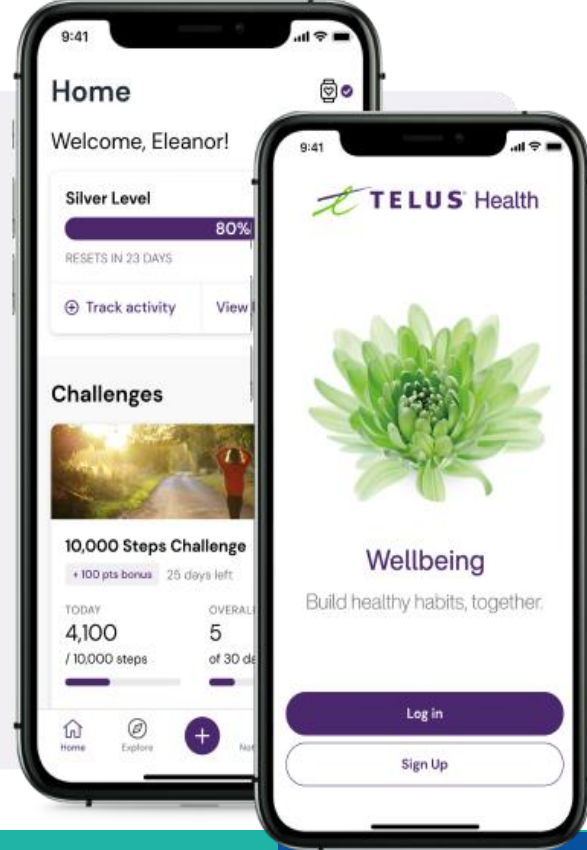
Invite sent to all staff





Looking for bite-sized ways to **improve health and wellbeing?**

Download **TELUS Health Wellbeing**.



Wellness Event

Live Orientation about the TELUS Health

Wellbeing App

Thursday March,6 2025 @ 1:00 PM

Microsoft Teams invite sent to all staff



Virtual Chair Yoga

Wellness Event

Take a break and refresh your mind & body with **Virtual Chair Yoga!** 🪑 ✨ Join us for a relaxing session designed to **reduce stress, improve posture, and boost energy**—all from the comfort of your chair!

Date: March 7, 2025

Time: 11:00 AM-11:30AM

Place: Microsoft Teams

Invite sent to all staff



Wellness Resources

Employee Meditation Room

As a gentle reminder, we'd like to encourage all staff to make the most of **IHDA's Employee Meditation Room** located on the 11th floor in the Prairie/Meditation Conference room.

This serene space offers a tranquil environment for you to take a break, unwind, and recharge during your time in the office. You can reserve **10-minute slots** using **Outlook**, ensuring you have dedicated moments for meditation. Additionally, there are prerecorded meditations available on the TV or feel free to use your own, accompanied by **yoga mats** for those interested in stretching.

Let's prioritize our well-being by taking advantage of this resource.





Diabetes
management,
your way

Weight loss isn't
one-size-fits-all

Meet Wondr, the weight-loss
program that fits you.

Personalized pain care that
gets you moving

Wellness Resources

Free Digital Health Services for [BCBSIL Members!](#)

Take advantage of **free** wellness programs available through your **BCBSIL** plan:

Hinge Health – Virtual Pain Relief

Personalized exercise therapy for joint & muscle pain
1-on-1 coaching & motion-tracking technology

Wondr Health – Digital Weight Loss

Science-backed, no-diet weight loss program
Expert-led lessons, sleep & stress management

Teladoc Diabetes Management

Free blood glucose meter, unlimited strips & lancets
Personalized tips & real-time support

These **no-cost** programs support your health & well-being. **Sign up today!**



High blood
pressure
management,
your way

\$0
cost to you

Fitness Program Reimbursement

- Wellness Club reimburses up to \$25.00 per month for fitness programs, including gym memberships.
- Reimbursement will be no more than your total month membership cost. **(proof of membership required)**
- Email proof of membership to Wellness@ihda.org
- Reimbursement processed on 7/15/25 and 1/15/26 payroll.
- Receipts for **January-June** are due 6/30/25
- Receipts for **July-December** are due 12/31/25.

***No reimbursements if receipts are not submitted by the deadline, no exceptions.**





The **ultimate** gifting choice



A one-stop shop of **300+ top brands!**

& more!

Wellness Club Redemption Points & Rewards – New Process

You can now redeem your points **quarterly** on the **TELUS Health Wellbeing Tracking System**.

How It Works

- Points **reset every quarter**, so be sure to track them before the deadline.
- You can earn up to **\$100 per quarter** and a maximum of **\$400 annually**.
- **Quarterly redemption deadlines:**
 - **March 31**
 - **June 30**
 - **September 30**
 - **December 31**

Point redemption period is separate from the reimbursements, discounts, and prizes earned or received with other wellness events.

Redemption Levels:

Bronze (1000 points)- Redeem \$20.00 gift card

Silver (2,000 points)-Redeem \$30 gift card

Gold (3,000 points) – Redeem \$50.00 gift card

Earn up to **\$100** quarterly and up to **\$400 per year** by participating in wellness activities and tracking your progress

2025 Virtual Food Drive Coming this Spring!

IHDA GIVES!



**GREATER
CHICAGO
FOOD
DEPOSITORY**

A Virtual Food Drive is a convenient way to donate. You have the option to shop for the food items you would like to donate or simply donate a dollar amount. Either way in just a few clicks your donation will be complete.

Check the [Tuesday Times Newsletter](#) for upcoming announcements.

Please support my

**VIRTUAL
FOOD
DRIVE**



Questions?

Email Wellness@ihda.org



**Achieve a healthier lifestyle
and earn rewards!**

IHDA's Human Resources Team!

