

FITNESS ROOM BEST PRACTICES

A growing trend in modern workplaces is to promote a healthy lifestyle by incorporating fitness equipment into the office environment. Statistics show that promoting healthy lifestyles can lower absenteeism rates among employees. However, exercising in the office environment does come with some risks. It is important to understand what they are and have policies and processes in place to manage the risks as much as possible.

There are many choices and types of exercise equipment available, including weight benches, free weights, treadmills, punching bags, exercise balls, and more sophisticated equipment designed to exercise specific parts of the body, to name just a few. It is important to maintain a safe environment while exercising. Slips and falls, strains, sprains, scrapes, cuts, bruises, and more serious injuries are possible when using gym and weight room equipment. The following are best practices for setting up and operating a fitness room in the workplace.

1. It is important to keep records of who manufactured the equipment, sold it to you, and installed it. Avoid using donated or used equipment if possible. As part of your agreement, obtain a written proposal from the installer that specifies the type of equipment they recommend you install. Request an initial Certificate of Insurance from the installer and require the installed to update the certificate annually.
2. It is recommended using a signed written [Use of Gym Agreement](#) would be required for each employee using the gym and the equipment. **The agreement should include the following at a minimum:**
 - The employee must acknowledge the use of the fitness room is strictly voluntary, and the facility is to be used on the employee's own unpaid, off-the-job time. And based on this requirement, any injury sustained by the employee shall not be deemed to be "work-related," or compensable.
 - The employee should acknowledge the facility is unsupervised.
 - By signing the agreement, employees certify they are in good physical health and do not suffer from any medical conditions that would preclude using the facility and equipment. Employees agree to notify the appropriate agency representative immediately if their medical condition changes and discontinue the equipment's use accordingly.
 - Employees are using the fitness room "at their own risk" and, by signing the agreement, are indemnifying and holding the agency harmless from all liability resulting from the use of the fitness area and the equipment located in the fitness room.
 - Employees are permitted to use the fitness room during posted hours only. They cannot allow any family member or friend to use the fitness room under any circumstances unless the family member or friend is employed by the same agency.
 - Employees will notify the appropriate agency representative immediately of any broken equipment or unsafe condition they see.
 - Employees are required to clean the equipment after use in accordance with the posted rules and regulations for the use of the fitness room.
 - Employees certify they have received a copy of the "Fitness Room Policy" and they will follow all of the provisions included in the policy.
 - Failure to abide by the posted "Rules and Regulations" and the provisions outlined in the "Use of Gym Agreement" shall disqualify the employee from further use of the fitness room.

3. Post signage in several visible locations in the fitness room notifying users of the following:
 - The facility is unsupervised.
 - The posted hours of operation.
 - Employees may only use the fitness room and equipment during employee's off-hours.
 - Use of the fitness room and equipment is prohibited unless the employee has signed a [Use of Gym Agreement](#).
 - Use of the fitness room by anyone other than employees who have signed the agreement is prohibited.
 - Employees are using the fitness room "at their own risk" and are indemnifying and holding the agency harmless from all liability resulting from the use of the fitness room and the equipment located in the fitness room.
 - Require everyone to report all defects immediately to a specified individual (use a title rather than a name) and instruct them to discontinue using the equipment immediately.
 - All employees are required to follow the guidelines established in the [Fitness/Exercise Room Policy](#).
 - Post an emergency contact number in case of a medical emergency.
4. Identify who will be responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the fitness room and the equipment. Designate an individual from your staff to be responsible for maintenance or contract it out to a third party. Maintain a maintenance log and be sure to record all complaints. Require that the appropriate employee or third party service inspect and file an inspection sheet every week stating the fitness room has been inspected and all equipment appears to be in working order and keep copies in a logbook. The [Fitness Room Hazard Identification Form](#) as be utilized to document inspections. In some cases, it may be necessary to lock up the facility or close off a piece of equipment until it is repaired.
5. Follow CDC Guidance for cleaning and disinfecting gym and exercise equipment.
6. An Automated External Defibrillator (AED) should be located either in the gym facility or within close proximity for easy access, with appropriate signage indicating the presence and location of the AED.
7. Take the time to meet with your agency's attorney to review the proposed opening and operation of the gym and equipment and address any concerns your attorney may have before opening the facility. Providing employees with a fitness room and equipment to facilitate a healthier lifestyle is an asset to both employers and employees. However, it is important to make sure you protect your agency and your employees in doing so.

Review this bulletin with your agency's attorney and include any other provisions they recommend.