HEALTH LINKS

Employer Toolkit

Addressing Fatigue in the Workplace

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Workplace Napping Policy Considerations Checklist

This checklist is designed to guide organizations through the key considerations involved in developing, evaluating, and implementing a workplace napping policy. Because napping in operational environments, particularly in public safety and other 24/7 settings, carries both benefits and risks, careful planning is essential to ensure that any policy supports employee well-being without compromising safety, performance, or organizational culture.

The checklist is organized into five major sections: Purpose & Intended Outcomes, Individual-Level Considerations, Workplace-Level Considerations, Considerations Against Implementation, and Final Decision Framework. Each section includes descriptors and actionable items to help leaders and policy developers systematically assess whether a napping program is appropriate for their setting and what structures must be in place for it to be successful.

To use this tool, review each section and evaluate whether the listed criteria are met, partially met, or require additional planning. Blank lines are included throughout to allow note taking, document decisions, or capture questions. The checklist can be used to:

- Assess organizational readiness
- Inform policy development
- Prepare for pilot testing
- Evaluate the feasibility of implementing a napping program as part of a broader fatigue risk management strategy

Not all items will apply equally to every workplace; however, thorough consideration of each area will help ensure that the final policy is safe, evidence-informed, and aligned with organizational needs and culture.

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Purpose & Intended Outcomes

Clarify why a napping policy is being considered and what success looks like before implementation.

Define the operational goals the policy is meant to support

(e.g. reduce fatigue, improve alertness, reduce errors)

Notes:

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Individual-Level Considerations

This section focuses on the personal factors that determine how well a nap supports alertness and job performance. Factors related to an employee's body, sleep habits, nap length and timing influence how effective and safe a workplace nap will be.

Personal Sleep & Health Factors

Consider each employee's sleep history, health conditions, and natural sleep tendencies.

- [ ] How long the person has been awake before the nap is taken
- [ ] Whether the person slept well or poorly the night before
- [ ] The person's natural sleep patterns (e.g., being a "night owl" or "morning person")
- [ ] Any known sleep-related health issues (such as trouble sleeping, sleep apnea, or difficulty staying awake)
- [ ] Awareness that some people feel groggy longer than others after waking up
- [ ] Whether the person actually finds naps helpful and comfortable

Notes:

Nap Duration

Ensure nap lengths are safe and provide maximum benefit with minimal grogginess.

- [ ] Recommended nap length ≤ 30 minutes
- [ ] Consideration of very short naps (e.g., 10-minute naps have been shown to maximize benefit with minimal sleep inertia)

Notes:

Nap Timing

Optimize naps based on circadian rhythms and shift realities.

- [ ] Early afternoon naps (approx. 13:00-17:00) shown to be beneficial
- [ ] Night shift timing (02:00–03:00) particularly helpful for shift workers

Notes:

Managing Sleep Inertia (Post-Nap Recovery)

Plan for the performance dip that may occur immediately after a nap.

- [ ] Allow 20–45 minutes of buffer time after a nap before performing cognitively demanding or safety-critical tasks
- [ ] Awareness of personal variability in sleep inertia intensity and duration
- [ ] Use of light, movement, or caffeine post-nap if appropriate

Notes:

Workplace-Level Considerations

Operational Feasibility

Make sure the workplace can realistically support naps without disrupting work or reducing service.

- [ ] Enough staff are available so someone can take a nap without leaving the team shorthanded
- [ ] Workload and call volume allow short breaks without impacting service
- [ ] Clear rules for when naps are allowed and when they are not (e.g., during high-call periods, staff shortages,critical incidents)
- [ ] Employees are clearly educated on when they're allowed to take breaks or naps, whether as part of their regular break/lunch schedule or through additional designated nap times

Notes:

Nap Environment & Facilities

Provide an appropriate and restorative physical space for napping.

- [ ] Dedicated napping space that is:
  - [ ] Quiet
  - [ ] Dark or dimmable
  - [ ] Appropriately cool
  - [ ] Separate from work activity
  - [ ] Equipped with comfortable, hygienic furniture
- [ ] Accessibility and safety of nap spaces
- [ ] Clear expectations for space use (e.g., duration limits, scheduling)

Notes:

Safety Considerations

Manage and monitor risks associated with sleep inertia and fatigue.

- [ ] Mandatory post-nap recovery period
- [ ] Avoiding high-risk tasks immediately after waking
- [ ] Monitoring of any negative performance impacts
- [ ] Clear procedures for reporting excessive fatigue
- [ ] Assessment of whether napping could cause or mitigate safety issues in real operations

Notes:

Cultural Readiness & Perception

Ensure staff and leadership attitudes support the policy and avoid stigma around napping.

- [ ] Evaluate existing attitudes toward napping on duty
- [ ] Assess implicit norms (e.g., stigma, perceived professionalism)
- [ ] Consider how public perception of "sleeping on the job" will be managed
- [ ] Leadership support and role modeling for fatigue management practices

Notes:

Policy Design and Communication

Provide clear rules, definitions, and communications so employees understand how the policy works.

- [ ] Clear definitions (e.g., nap vs. break, allowable durations)
- [ ] Transparent eligibility criteria (e.g., employee type such as full/part time or contractor, training requirements)
- [ ] Instructions on how to request or schedule a nap period
- [ ] Communication strategy for internal teams and external stakeholders

Notes:

Employee Education & Training

Prepare employees with knowledge to use naps safely and effectively

- [ ] Training on:
  - [ ] Recognizing signs of fatigue
  - [ ] Safe and effective napping strategies
  - [ ] Sleep inertia and its implications
  - [ ] Appropriate timing and duration of naps
- [ ] Guidance on personal sleep hygiene outside of work
- [ ] Education on how naps fit within a broader fatigue risk management strategy

Notes:

Integration With Other Fatigue Management Strategies

Fatigue Management Strategies are a set of approaches and practices designed to help employees stay alert, focused, and safe while on the job, even during long hours, night shifts, or demanding work. They aim to reduce tiredness that can affect performance, decision-making, and overall health.

Naps should complement (not replace) other strategies, such as:

- [ ] Planning work schedules, breaks, and workload to ensure employees get enough rest and aren't overloaded with long or consecutive shifts
- [ ] Teaching employees about good sleep practices, like maintaining consistent sleep schedules, creating an optimal sleep environment, and addressing sleep disorders
- [ ] Using environmental tools to stay awake, such as bright lights, movement breaks, or adjusting temperature
- [ ] Encouraging healthy lifestyle habits, including exercise, balanced nutrition, and overall wellness
- [ ] Providing access to wellness or mental health resources, so employees have support for managing stress and overall well-being
- [ ] Monitoring fatigue levels and encouraging reporting, so employees can speak up when they feel too tired to work safely
- [ ] Using fatigue risk assessment tools, such as surveys, wearables, or simple alertness tests to identify when someone might be at risk

Notes:

Policy Monitoring, Evaluation & Adjustment

Evaluate the policy, measure its impact, and refine it over time.

- Pilot testing before full implementation
- Collecting data on:
  - Fatigue levels
  - Performance and safety indicators
  - Employee satisfaction
- Post-implementation review and iterative improvements
- Mechanism for employee input and ongoing improvement

Notes:

Considerations Against Implementing a Policy

Even though workplace naps can offer benefits, there are situations where putting a napping policy in place may not be practical, safe, or supported. Organizations should carefully consider the following factors when determining whether a policy is not the right fit:

- [ ] Insufficient staffing or operational flexibility (e.g., the workplace does not have enough staffing or coverage to allow employees to step away safely for a nap; or workload or call volume is too unpredictable or consistently high to create reliable break opportunities)
- [ ] Cultural resistance or negative perceptions (e.g., significant stigma or negative attitudes exist from employees, leadership, or the public)
- [ ] Inability to provide safe, appropriate nap spaces
- [ ] Safety risks outweigh potential benefits
- [ ] Lack of leadership support or misalignment with organizational priorities (e.g., leaders are not aligned to the value of a napping policy or insufficient resources to properly train employees on safe and effective napping)

Notes:

Final Decision Framework

Before starting a workplace napping program, it's important to confirm the organization is ready.

Is the organization culturally ready?

Notes:

Do operational conditions support napping?

Notes:

Can safety risks be mitigated?

Notes:

Do employees understand how to nap safely and effectively?

Notes:

Are facilities and training in place?

Notes:

Is leadership aligned and supportive?

Notes:

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