

# **International Council on Active Aging**

## **Guide to staffing within the wellness function**

### **Wellness job descriptions analysis**

**Wellness director**

**Wellness coordinator**

This analysis is based on job descriptions submitted by ICAA members and colleagues in autumn 2007 in reply to an email request. There were 12 job descriptions received for wellness coordinator and 12 received for wellness director. Not all job descriptions were included, and not all were written with the items included in this analysis:

- Education
- Experience
- Skills, Knowledge, Abilities
- Tasks

There were 3 job descriptions that used “wellness director” to describe the nurse who screened new residents, wrote a health care and activities plan, supervised medications management and nursing staff. These nursing job descriptions were excluded.

The term “wellness” appears to be applied to job titles primarily in retirement communities, medical fitness and specialized independent health clubs. Other work locations (eg, public recreation, government agencies, seniors centers, health clubs) use titles including “fitness” or “recreation” or “program” to describe similar job responsibilities.

While the job titles are fairly consistent, the reporting structure and department home are extremely varied.

### **Wellness philosophy dictates responsibilities**

The majority of job descriptions divided into two groups:

1. “wellness” used to describe responsibility for physical fitness
2. “wellness” used to describe responsibility for multiple dimensions, including physical fitness, social and spiritual activities, creative arts, recreation, games and sometimes transportation

Requirements for education, credentials and experience differ depending on whether the position is responsible solely for physical fitness or is responsible for multiple dimensions of wellness.

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### **Differences in “director” and “coordinator” titles**

In general, wellness directors are responsible for multiple dimensions of wellness and wellness coordinators are responsible for physical fitness.

The directors who are responsible primarily for physical fitness have education and experience requirements comparable to those of fitness-only coordinators. The directors and coordinators who are responsible for physical activity appear to have responsibilities similar to fitness directors.

There is a tendency for directors to supervise multiple facilities and for coordinators to be located at a single site. However, this is not well-defined; the titles appear to be more influenced by scope of responsibilities.

### **Responsibility levels for “director” and “coordinator” titles**

The distinction between these titles appears to depend on the organization. For example, wellness “coordinators” and “directors” may both have responsibility for writing and maintaining an annual budget; overall operations of a fitness facility; and developing and implementing a wellness program.

Directors, who generally are required to have more experience, also have more responsibility in terms of cross-functional responsibilities, hiring and training, and program management. However, since there were few director job descriptions that could be used for this analysis, and more wellness coordinator descriptions, this observation is limited.

### **Wellness Director multidimensional responsibilities**

#### ***Alternate titles:***

Director of Wellness and Prevention, Health & Wellness Director, [Corporate program name] Director, Wellness Center Manager, Wellness Center Director, Wellness Director, Wellness Manager

#### ***Department:***

Administration, Health & Wellness, Nursing/Health Center, Resident Life, Safety and Risk Management, Wellness, Wellness Center

#### ***Reports to:***

Compliance and Risk Office, Director of Health Services, Director of Resident Life, Executive Director, General Manager, Manager/Administrator, Residence Director

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**Education:**

- Degrees for directors are more likely to be required (as opposed to coordinators, where degrees were more likely preferred).

No. of entries on descriptions	
2	Masters degree plus experience
2	Bachelors degree plus experience
1	Bachelors degree and/or education and experience
1	Bachelors or masters plus experience and continuing education
1	Degree and/or certification
6	Fitness certifications
3	CPR and first aid certifications
2	Lifeguard certification or training
1	Special class of drivers license

**Suggested degree fields:**

Exercise science	Health education
Recreational therapy	Physical education
Exercise science	Public health
Exercise physiology	

Masters with coursework in: Health/Wellness Program Development, Exercise Science, Wellness Coaching, Gerontology (Social Gerontology, Biology of Aging), Management

**Certifications:**

ACSM, SFA, ACE, AFAA, arthritis, Cooper Institute, AEA, pool operator

**Experience:**

No. of entries on descriptions	
3	5 years center or program management experience
3	Previous experience with older adults and special populations; program development
1	3-5 years instructor or trainer experience
1	3-5 years older adults program or management experience
1	3 years related experience
2	2-3 years program or staff management experience
1	1-2 years work experience
1	Ergonomic training and injury prevention experience
1	Experience in directing research projects
1	Experience in exercise testing and prescription, wellness programming and health education for older adults
1	Experience with community partnerships and collaborations
1	Facility/pool management and supervisory experience
1	Familiarity with aging programs, benefits and resources

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1	Strong experience in customer service and satisfaction
1	Supervisory experience, operations experience a plus

### Wellness Coordinator

***Alternate title:***

Assistant Wellness Director, Health and Wellness Coordinator

***Departments:***

Resident Services, Rehabilitation Services, Resident Life, Administration

***Reports to:***

General Manager, Wellness and Vitality Manager, Administrator, Wellness Manager, Community Services Manager, Director of Operations, Resident Services Director, Wellness Center Director

***Education:***

- College degrees and fitness certifications were generally preferred but not required.
- Most degree suggestions added “or related field.”

No. of entries on descriptions	
1	Masters degree
6	Bachelors or masters degree
3	Bachelors/masters or certification and/or experience
2	Associates (2-year) degree
1	Continuing education in addition to degree/certification
1	High school diploma or GED
1	Certificates in management, gerontology, volunteer management
1	Certification in recreation/activation
4	Fitness certifications
4	CPR and first aid certifications
1	Lifeguard certification or training
3	Drivers license or special class of drivers license

***Suggested degree fields:***

Exercise Physiology	Health and Wellness	Physical Education
Exercise	Health Education	Physical Therapy
Prescription	Health Promotion	Psychology
Exercise Science	Health Science	Recreational Therapy
Exercise Specialist	Kinesiology	Sociology
Fitness Management	Management	Sports Medicine
Gerontology	Occupational Therapy	

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### ***Certifications:***

ACSM, ACE, SFA, NSCA, AEA, AFAA

### ***Experience:***

No. of entries on descriptions	
2	previous experience with mature adults
1	3-5 years teaching or assistant experience
1	3 years work experience
2	2 years work experience
2	1-2 years work experience

### **Knowledge, skills and abilities**

- There was overlap between the two titles in this area.
- Personality traits such as cheerfulness, patience and tact were emphasized.
- Ability and demonstrated skills in planning, organizing, handling multiple priorities and using computer programs appeared frequently.
- The words listed here are pulled from the job descriptions and individual phrases separated by commas. Specific wording was not included in keeping with the confidentiality of the documents.

### ***Knowledge***

*Facts, information or principles that can be directly applied to performing a job.*

Computer software including word processing, spreadsheets and other applications  
Experience in developing wellness programs for older adults or serving as an assistant to person developing program  
Knowledge of the aging process, exercise prescriptions, risk factor, physical challenges  
Experience working with older adults  
Knowledge of community and local resources  
Current knowledge of the industry

### ***Skills***

*Competencies that enable a person to perform the requirements of the job or provide the base to learn additional skills.*

Excellent customer service  
Communication and interpersonal skills  
Document and track outcomes  
Apply recognized exercise protocols  
Instruct and motivate  
Computer proficiency in word processing and spreadsheet applications

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Demonstrated leadership skills  
Demonstrated organizational skills  
Strong oral and written communication skills  
Lead exercise classes, conduct fitness assessments, calculate heart rate zones, teach one-to-one, demonstrate exercise equipment

### ***Abilities***

*Behaviors, attitudes, activities and attributes that influence performance.*

Develop and implement wellness program  
Develop program that maintain independence, maintain or improve functional levels, lead to quality of life  
Plan, organize, prioritize, manage multiple priorities  
Comfortable in fast-paced and stressful environment  
Follow-through and accountability  
Educate staff, clients and nonparticipants  
Meet business goals  
Define and report outcomes  
Understand and seek customer satisfaction  
Continually improve operations  
Make decisions with sound judgment

Work well with older adults, enjoy working with older adults, desire to work with mature adults  
Role model of healthy lifestyle  
Positive, energetic, enthusiastic, cheerful  
Compassionate, warm, caring, nonjudgmental, outgoing  
Creative, imaginative  
Ethical, confidential  
Interested in learning  
Courteous, tactful, patient  
Ability to deal with difficult people  
Listens  
Shows initiative

Communicates with clients, staff, family members  
Works positively and continually with other departments and staff, build relationships with inside and outside people and organizations  
Work independently and in teams  
Clear speaking voice  
Strong written and verbal and visual communication

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### Job responsibilities

- There was overlap between the two titles in this area.
- There was a frequent emphasis on working with other departments and staff members, building relationships and performing within a cross-functional mindset.
- The words and phrases listed here are pulled from the job descriptions and individual phrases may be separated by commas. Specific wording was not included in most, but not all, cases in keeping with the confidentiality of the documents.

### *Management*

Uphold the organization's values, philosophy, procedures and policies  
Respect and uphold resident's rights, privacy

Responsible for daily operations

Develop annual goals and budget

Develop tracking system to report on outcomes and results

Prepare reports of outcomes that are objective and contribute to decision making

Develop and maintain system to track participation and use results to increase participation

Manage operations of the wellness center, including programs, budget, staff, volunteers, supplies, equipment

Develop and monitor policies for fitness and pool area, maintain pool

Organize and attend meetings

Develop or contribute to development of annual budget and plan, monitor adherence to budget, prepare projections, make recommendations

Develop and manage budget for volunteer program

Responsible for purchasing, approving receipts, planning maintenance and repair expenses

Report on status of budget

Maintain equipment, replace equipment when needed, liaison with equipment servicing companies

Ensure safety of participants by keeping equipment in good running order, making sure area is clean and safe

Document maintenance and equipment problems

Hire, train and supervise wellness staff members, including paid staff, volunteers, interns

Prepare organizational structure and schedule for staff and volunteers

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### ***Teamwork***

Build and maintain relationships with other staff, departments, resident and clients  
Participate in meetings in other areas  
Coordinate and liaison with medical and rehabilitation staff, dietetics, social services, resident services; establish continuum of services with other departments  
Network with other community services and professionals to provide programs and referrals  
Attend or speak at local and national meetings and trainings  
Participate in marketing initiatives including those launched by other departments  
Join and actively participate in organization's development, leadership, and continuing education initiatives

### ***Volunteers***

Plan and establish volunteer program, including screening, training, monitoring and recognition  
Involve residents in planning, providing, promoting and evaluating

### ***Program***

Develop and implement effective wellness program, comprehensive wellness program, program for residents and staff  
Develop and implement wellness program that includes physical, emotional, spiritual, social, intellectual and vocational activities  
Develop and implement fitness, aquatics, health education, activities and events  
Evaluate wellness program  
Provide fee-based services such as personal training, massage, and so forth  
Organize health fairs, social events, special events, charity events, clubs  
Schedule speakers, coordinate, prepare  
Implement new programs on a monthly basis  
Access in-house and outside resource to present activities  
Provide ongoing education for residents and staff  
Be available and create opportunities for input on wellness program  
Schedule or drive bus or van to activities  
Establish, direct and lead wellness committee, meet with committee regularly

### ***Marketing and promotion***

Monitor attendance, maintain records, prepare statistics, comply with organization's requirements for recordkeeping  
Develop and maintain membership retention program  
Develop and maintain new participant orientation program  
Develop recognition program  
Follow up with individuals to adjust program and encourage adherence  
Promote program through demonstrations and special program  
Plan and deliver incentive program to enhance participation

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Prepare and publish schedule of weekly and monthly activities  
Communicate through flyers, bulletin boards, contributions to newsletter, articles, calendars, television and other channels  
Interact with clients, residents, families and other staff to announce and promote the wellness program on an ongoing basis  
Develop relationships with potential and current participants to encourage attendance

### ***Physical activity***

Develop exercise programs that are appropriate for older adults, that support activities of daily living, that support lifestyle interests  
Conduct fitness assessments and write exercise plan for individuals  
Instruct classes in fitness center and/or swimming pool  
Teach aquatics classes, serve as lifeguard  
Train one-to-one in fitness center, swimming pool  
Demonstrate equipment, evaluate and correct exercise technique  
Maintain records of exercise sessions and outcomes