



## UNITED STATES ARMY PUBLIC HEALTH COMMAND

### Public Affairs Office

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## Army Wellness Center Operations Program

### Mission

The Army Wellness Center Operations Program oversees Army Wellness Centers. It supports military medical providers in addressing lifestyle issues that lead to chronic disease, injury and lessened quality of life for Army community members and reduce the readiness of Army units.

The standard AWC model was developed as a result of an unmet need for a targeted, evidence-based approach to health promotion and primary prevention services in the Army health system that remains consistent across Army installations. (Primary prevention is the level of prevention that occurs before disease, injury or disability.) AWCs also came about to meet the needs of Army commanders for medical support in building and sustaining force health and readiness; addressing family member health promotion needs; and establishing a command climate that supports overall health and well-being. They assist their clients in making behavior changes that build and sustain good health.

### What are Army Wellness Centers?

The AWC program supports the [Army's Ready and Resilient Campaign](#), the Army surgeon general's [Performance Triad](#) of activity, nutrition and sleep; and U.S. Army Medical Command's [Patient-Centered Medical Home](#) initiative.

Individual AWCs are the outreach arm of patient care, addressing lifestyle change in areas that affect short- and long-term health outside of the medical appointment. They integrate with and augment the efforts of primary-care medical providers to influence behavior changes that build and sustain good health.

AWCs also focus on improving unit readiness. Their programs target Army physical fitness standards by supporting the achievement of strength, flexibility, weight, cardiovascular and fitness requirements. Soldiers who are negatively impacting unit readiness will benefit most. AWCs also help reduce lost- and limited-duty time due to injury by helping Soldiers understand how to train right and avoid overtraining.

### Clients

Although all military health system beneficiaries and Army civilians are eligible for AWC programs and services, active-duty military are given priority for available appointments. Standard AWCs offer a core set of programs to address client behaviors most closely linked with preventable disease. These behaviors include physical inactivity, poor nutrition habits, high levels of stress and tobacco use.

### Structure and Organization

The AWC program is managed by the U.S. Army Public Health Command, which oversees the operation of AWCs, sets standards for AWC programs and operations, trains AWC staff members, and assesses the consistency and quality of AWCs and their programs.

It is one of four programs in the Health Promotion and Wellness Portfolio at the Army Institute of Public Health. The AIPH is a subordinate unit of U.S. Army Public Health Command. These organizations are located at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md. The USAPHC is a major subordinate command of the U.S. Army Medical Command.

### Army Wellness Center Products and Services

The AWC approach to service is holistic. AWC staff members take into account an individual's physical, psychological and social circumstances when providing services. AWCs offer the following core programs:

- Health assessment review: An analysis of a person's health status, risk for disease and ability to increase physical activity safely.
- Physical fitness: Physical fitness level is determined and used to create an individualized exercise prescription.
- Healthy nutrition: Use of metabolic testing and body composition analysis to provide tailored strategies for healthy eating and weight loss, gain or maintenance.
- Stress management: Education in biofeedback and stress relief techniques, positive coping skills and good sleep habits.



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- General wellness education: Classes on topics such as healthy lifestyles, increased resiliency, preventing chronic disease, stress management and self-care.
- Tobacco education: An assessment of an individual's readiness to change, a discussion of possible options for becoming tobacco-free, and provision of the appropriate tobacco cessation education.

### Army Wellness Center Top Initiatives

The USAPHC has been directed by U.S. Army Medical Command to stand up 37 AWCs worldwide by the end of fiscal 2017. Currently most Forces Command installations have centers, and there are four AWCs operating in Europe. The USAPHC's home installation, Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md., also has an operating AWC.

When AWCs are fully implemented at installations, the fitness records of Soldiers and their family members will follow them to new duty stations—every AWC visit is documented in the electronic medical record. As well, the same standard programs and services will be available on all Army installations that have an Army Wellness Center.

### Army Wellness Center Partnerships

AWCs operate as a partnership among Army installations, medical treatment facilities, and the USAPHC as MEDCOM's program manager for AWCs. AWC policy and program standards are established and monitored by the USAPHC, which retains oversight of AWCs. Day-to-day operation and service delivery is the responsibility of the MTF commander. In coordination with the USAPHC, the Installation Management Command provides centrally located building space for AWCs.

AWCs are staffed by nurse- and health-educators who are cross-trained in the delivery of primary prevention programs. Referrals to AWCs are made by a military medical provider or by a unit commander; eligible beneficiaries and Army civilians also may self-refer.

### Army Wellness Center Contributions

Army Wellness Centers support medical providers in addressing patient lifestyle issues. They enhance primary prevention by creating the environment where healthy changes can take place at the individual level. For those already affected by stress, lifestyle-related disease, injury or less-than-optimal physical conditions, they facilitate change to bring about improvements in health, in keeping with the individual's goals and abilities.

AWCs are part of a broader public health effort that focuses on installation-level health promotion and wellness. They support an Army-wide health promotion strategy that also includes Community Health Promotion Councils with [health promotion officers](#), Health Promotion Teams, and [public health assessments](#) of evidence-based health promotion/wellness program effectiveness.

Army Wellness Centers are a leading effort in Army medicine's goal of moving from a healthcare system to a system for health.