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## *Policies and Benefits*

### **Healthy lifestyle, stress reduction counseling help keep holiday blues away**

For most people, the holidays are a time of celebration, but the added demands of the season can also lead to increased emotional and physical stress. Here are some important things you can do throughout the year which will help you deal with the added stress of the holiday season and improve your health over the long term.

Regular checkups are an essential part of every wellness program. You should visit your health care provider at least once a year for an overall evaluation and to discuss medical screening and exams you may need to discover any existing health issues and to find potential problems before they become more serious.

Never underestimate the importance of healthy diet and regular exercise as part of your daily fitness routine. Always include an assortment of foods from the major food groups: fruits, vegetables, grains, protein foods and dairy. Exercise at least two and a half hours each week, and be sure to check with your doctor before you begin a new exercise program.

Even if you get regular checkups, eat right and exercise, a busy holiday schedule can be overwhelming. If possible, take some time for effective planning. Make a list of everything you need to do during the season and check items off as you accomplish each task.



When shopping, remember your spending limits and stay within your means. Before you go to the store for food or gifts, make a budget and then stick to it. Be aware of your limits and remember that it's all right to decline an invitation. People will understand that you cannot attend every activity which takes place during the holiday season.

Choose your activities wisely by participating in events which are most important to you.

Finally, if you find yourself having difficulty dealing with holiday stress, seek professional help. The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) has established the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to help support employees in both their professional and personal lives. EAP provides professional help with stress reduction; nutrition and general wellness; identifying and dealing with problems such as alcoholism, drug dependency or psychological disorders; and even referrals for help from legal resources and financial experts. EAP employees do not work for TDCJ and communications with them are confidential. There is no charge for contacting the EAP. For more information about the EAP, call 866-832-5927 or visit the agency's EAP Web page.

In addition to the EAP, TDCJ's Wellness Initiative Now (WIN) program promotes personal well-being, fitness and nutrition for all employees. For information, go to agency's WIN Web page.

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Remember that stress can lead to serious negative health effects at any time of year. To help fight stress, maintain a balanced diet, get plenty of exercise and manage your time wisely. Above all, if you find that you just can't deal with the holidays, take advantage of the professional counselors available to all agency employees through the EAP. ●