

# Dakota Wellness Program

## JANUARY 2025

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Join Sanford Health Plan  
Wellness team members for  
our monthly 15-minute  
wellness webinar.

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NORTH DAKOTA  
PUBLIC EMPLOYEES  
RETIREMENT SYSTEM

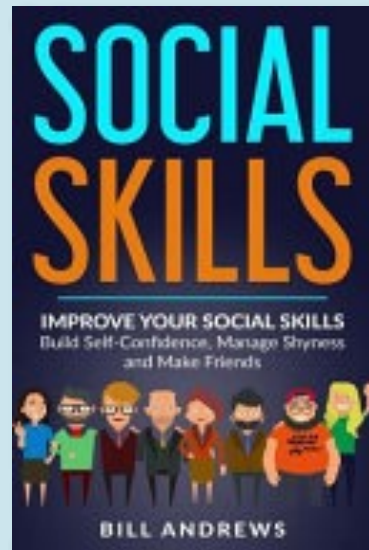
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HEALTH PLAN



# Social Wellness Toolkit:

## Building Strong Relationships for a Healthier Life

Social wellness is essential for both mental and physical health. Strong connections with family, friends, and community can reduce stress, improve well-being, and even extend life. To build social connections, consider joining a hobby group, volunteering, or participating in fitness classes and community events. Caregivers must prioritize self-care to prevent burnout by asking for help, maintaining routines, and keeping up with personal interests. Physical activity with others, like group classes or family activities, can boost motivation and enhance your health. Healthy relationships require open communication, empathy, and respect. It's important to set boundaries, listen without judgment, and resolve conflicts respectfully. By nurturing your social wellness, you can improve your relationships, create support systems, and promote a healthier, more fulfilling life.



## Book Club

### ***Social Skills: Improve Your Social Skills- Build Self-Confidence, Manage Shyness & Make Friends*** **By Bill Andrews**

If you have ever struggled to make the right impression in any kind of social setting, you need to read this book. What truly sets this book apart from similar social skills guides is its focus on a step-by-step approach that starts with the right mindset. Too many people fail to unlock their full social potential because they start the project with the wrong ideas and attitudes. This book enables you to get over whatever problems you may have in public speaking, public appearances, reaching out to strangers, and making friends. Instead of pumping you up with weak and shallow hacks that don't really add up to much of anything, you get a FOUNDATION-based approach to social skills. The bottom line? Learn how to LOVE and ACCEPT yourself to get the firm, unshakable foundation you need to do well in any kind of social situation. This book gives you the proper intellectual and emotional grounding you need to fully unleash your social potential. It doesn't matter how socially inept you think you are. It doesn't matter how much of a 'fish out of water' you feel you are; this book can help you achieve great breakthroughs.

### **Discussion questions**

1. **Understanding Confidence:** Andrews highlights various strategies to build self-confidence. Which specific techniques discussed in the book do you think are most effective for developing self-assurance in social situations, and why? How might these techniques differ for someone who experiences severe social anxiety?
2. **Managing Shyness:** The book explores methods for overcoming shyness and becoming more comfortable in social interactions. What role does self-awareness play in managing shyness, according to Andrews? How might cultivating self-awareness change one's perspective on social interactions?
3. **Building Meaningful Connections:** Making friends and fostering connections is a key focus in *Improve Your Social Skills*. What strategies does Andrews propose for developing genuine friendships, and how do these differ from more superficial social interactions? How might these strategies apply to both personal and professional relationships?

## Ask the Expert: Why is maintaining a healthy weight Important?

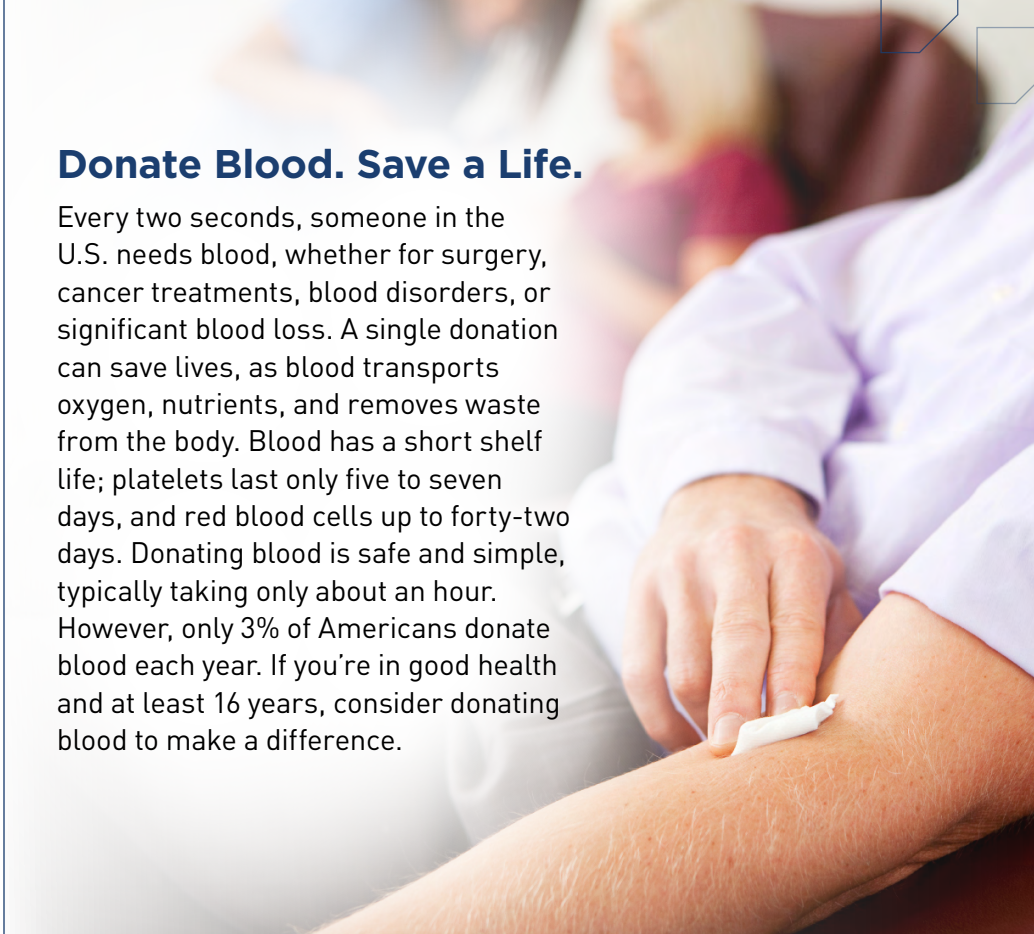
Maintaining a healthy weight is crucial for overall well-being and disease prevention. Being overweight or obese increases the risk of serious health issues like heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, and certain cancers. Healthy weight management involves understanding that overweight refers to excess body weight, while obesity means excess body fat. Key factors include environment, genetics, metabolism, and habits. Achieving energy balance – where the calories consumed match the energy used – is essential.

Manage a healthy weight by following a balanced diet, engaging in regular physical activity and minimizing sedentary behavior. Consistent, long-term balance in energy intake and expenditure supports a healthy weight.



## Donate Blood. Save a Life.

Every two seconds, someone in the U.S. needs blood, whether for surgery, cancer treatments, blood disorders, or significant blood loss. A single donation can save lives, as blood transports oxygen, nutrients, and removes waste from the body. Blood has a short shelf life; platelets last only five to seven days, and red blood cells up to forty-two days. Donating blood is safe and simple, typically taking only about an hour. However, only 3% of Americans donate blood each year. If you're in good health and at least 16 years, consider donating blood to make a difference.



## Give it a try...

### Dakota Wellness Program 2025 wellness benefit

You can earn up to \$250 in rewards in 2025 if you are a part of the NDPERS and Sanford Health Plan insurance plan. To get started take your Health Risk Assessment at [sanfordhealthplan.com/memberlogin](https://sanfordhealthplan.com/memberlogin). Click on 'Menu' in upper left-hand corner, scroll down to the 'Insurance' section and click on 'Wellness Portal' to begin.

#### After completing your assessment, you can earn rewards by:

- Tracking health habits, completing educational session and visiting your doctor or dentist for check-ups
- Going the gym or doing virtual classes offered by a contacted gym as a part of our fitness center reimbursement program
- Participating in wellness events put on by your wellness coordinator or Sanford Health Plan and receiving a voucher after participation

To learn more about your 2025 wellness benefit and all the ways you can earn rewards visit [sanfordhealthplan.com/ndpers/dakotawellnessprogram](https://sanfordhealthplan.com/ndpers/dakotawellnessprogram).



# Preventive Health

January is National Staying Healthy Month. The benefits of health happen when good habits and choices are maintained over time. A new year is a great time to make healthy changes for your mind and body. It is important to focus on self-care and overall well-being anytime of the year, but a new year gives the opportunity for a new fresh start!

To give yourself the best opportunity for success, it is important to have a plan. To avoid feeling overwhelmed, make sure to make goals that are easy to achieve and be sure not to make too many changes at once.

## Consider these tips:

- Make goals SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant/Reward-Based and Time-Defined)
- Plan for the types of support you may need. It's ok to ask for accountability and help.
- Identify your own barriers for change and have a plan to address each one. Barriers may include things like your schedule or access to different resources.
- Know your motivators. Why do you want to make changes? How do you want your life to improve?

## Monthly Observances

**Cervical Health Awareness**

**Glaucoma Awareness**

**National Birth Defects Prevention**

**National Blood Donor**

**Thyroid Awareness**

## Pulled Chicken, Ancho Chili & Black Bean Soup

**Serves: 8**

### Ingredients

- |                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1 tsp olive oil                       | 15 oz canned diced tomatoes                       |
| 2 cup(s), chopped uncooked onion      | 1 pound uncooked boneless skinless chicken breast |
| 2 medium chopped Poblano chili pepper | 15 oz, rinsed and drained canned black beans      |
| 1½ tsp, divided kosher salt           | 2 cups, defrosted, frozen corn                    |
| 1 tbsp jarred minced garlic           | 1 tbsp fresh lime juice                           |
| 1 medium, diced red bell pepper       | 1 cup plain fat-free Greek yogurt                 |
| 2 tsp, or to taste chili powder       | ½ cup, chopped cilantro                           |
| 2 tsp, or to taste Ancho chili powder | ½ cup, chopped, sliced scallions                  |
| 2 tsp ground cumin                    |   |
| 4 cups fat-free chicken broth         |   |

### Instructions

1. Heat oil in a large soup pot over medium heat. Add onion, Poblano, and 1 tsp salt; cook, stirring often, until onion is soft, 7 to 10 minutes. Add garlic, red pepper, both chili powders, and cumin; cook, stirring a few times, 1 minute. Add broth and tomatoes; increase heat to high to bring to a boil.
2. Reduce heat to medium-low and bring to a simmer; add chicken to pot. Cover and simmer until cooked through, 7 to 10 minutes.
3. Remove chicken to a plate; let cool 2 to 3 minutes. Meanwhile, add beans and corn to pot; cook until heated through, 2 to 3 minutes.
4. Shred chicken with two forks; add back to soup. Stir in lime juice and remaining 1/2 tsp salt (or to taste); serve topped with yogurt, cilantro, and scallions.



## QUICK LINKS

[sanfordhealthplan.com/ndpers](http://sanfordhealthplan.com/ndpers)

## SET-UP A

[mySanfordHealthPlan](http://mySanfordHealthPlan)

## ONLINE ACCOUNT

[sanfordhealthplan.com/memberlogin](http://sanfordhealthplan.com/memberlogin)

## CONTACT US

[NDPERSwellness@sanfordhealth.org](mailto:NDPERSwellness@sanfordhealth.org)  
(800) 499-3416 (TTY: 711)



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