

NBCH action brief

Community Health

According to the County Health Rankings, an annual breakdown of the health of counties in every state, there are a multitude of factors that influence health, including where people live, learn, work, and play.¹ Improving the health of a community should be everyone's business, and employers play a critical role in helping to build healthy communities and promote a healthy population. This Action Brief outlines the scope of community health; how health plans are addressing the issues based on data from eValue8™ — a resource used by purchasers to track health plan performance — and actions employers can take to partner with others and invest in the health of a community through sustainable and evidence-based interventions.

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT'S PREVENTION AND PUBLIC HEALTH FUND IS WORKING TO ADDRESS FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE HEALTH AND SHIFTING THE FOCUS FROM SICKNESS TO WELLNESS.²

CHRONIC DISEASE IMPACT

The staggering impact of chronic disease on our nation underscores the critical importance of prevention in reducing health care costs and building healthier communities.

- ▶ Health care spending in this country has grown to a new high of \$2.7 trillion,³ and more than 75% of such costs are due to chronic conditions.⁴
- ▶ Health care costs for people with a chronic condition average \$6,032 annually or five times higher than for those without such conditions.⁵
- ▶ Chronic diseases affect almost 50% of Americans and account for 7 of the 10 leading causes of death in the United States.⁶
- ▶ 27.8% of the U.S. adult population are obese; 9.5% have diabetes; 30.8% have high blood pressure; and 26.2% are sedentary (no physical activity outside of work for the last 30 days).⁷

PUBLIC HEALTH IS PREVENTION⁸

Our health care system is designed to manage and treat chronic disease, yet the system is realigning to create a coordinated, strategic approach to prevention.⁹

- ▶ Proven, community-based public health efforts can have a tremendous return on investment — saving lives, mitigating disease and injury, and curbing health care spending.¹⁰

- ▶ For every \$1 spent on prevention, \$5.60 is saved in health spending, a \$16 billion savings within five years.¹¹
- ▶ Today, only \$.03 of every dollar spent on health care goes toward public health and prevention.¹²

To improve the nation's health and prosperity, the National Prevention Strategy has organized four priorities:

- ▶ **Building Healthy and Safe Community Environments:** Health promotion need not be limited to the doctor's office.
- ▶ **Expanding Quality Preventive Services in Both Clinical and Community Settings:** Preventive care achieves better health and lower health care costs.
- ▶ **Empowering People to Make Healthy Choices:** Access to actionable and easy-to-understand information and resources enables healthier choices.¹³
- ▶ **Eliminating Health Disparities:** Removing disparities improves the quality of life for all Americans.

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR EMPLOYERS

- ▶ While chronic disease management is essential to those affected, the entire community can benefit from prevention efforts, and employers are taking notice.
- ▶ More than 90% of large employers and more than 60% of small employers offer at least one wellness benefit to their employees.¹⁴
- ▶ Research finds that medical costs fall by about \$3.27 for every dollar invested in worksite wellness programs.¹⁵
- ▶ Outside of the workplace, employers can obtain an even greater return on their wellness investment by partnering with other stakeholders to tackle prevention at the community level.

MEASURING UP

EVALUE8™ IS A RESOURCE USED BY PURCHASERS TO ASSESS HEALTH PLAN PERFORMANCE IN THE MANAGEMENT AND IMPROVEMENT OF HEALTH AND THE VALUE OF HEALTH CARE SERVICES. THE BELOW RESULTS HIGHLIGHT WORKSITE WELLNESS AND PREVENTION TRENDS FROM PARTICIPATING PLANS.

Worksite wellness programs are an important component of a public health strategy.¹⁶

- ▶ Nearly all (99%) plans provide general wellness resources such as template newsletter articles and printed materials as a standard benefit for fully-insured lives; 87% do so for self-insured lives.
- ▶ More specialized wellness services offered at the worksite are less common as a standard benefit; however, the majority of plans will provide such services at an additional fee.
- ▶ Only 12% of plans provide onsite biometric screenings as a standard benefit for fully-insured lives; less than 2% will do so for self-insured lives.
- ▶ 27% of plans provide onsite nutrition classes as a standard benefit for fully-insured lives; only 12% will do so for self-insured lives.
- ▶ One quarter of plans provide onsite fitness classes as a standard benefit for fully-insured lives; only 13% will do so for self-insured lives.
- ▶ 27% of plans provide onsite weight loss classes as a standard benefit for fully-insured lives; only 12% will do so for self-insured lives.

Research has demonstrated that financial incentives can influence health-related behavior.¹⁷

- ▶ 94% of plans provide financial incentives to members who complete a health assessment.
- ▶ 36% of plans will waive/adjust out-of-pocket payments for tests, treatments, and prescriptions upon participation in

“Business leaders must come to understand that they can do everything right to influence the health and productivity of their captured workforce at the worksite, but if that same workforce lives in unhealthy communities, employer investments can be lost or certainly weakened.”

— Andrew Webber, President & CEO, NBCH

Employer Incentives for Building Healthy Communities

- ▶ Improve the health status and productivity of an employer’s current and future workforce.
- ▶ Control direct (health care) and indirect (absenteeism, disability, presenteeism) costs to the employer.
- ▶ Create both the image and the reality of a healthy community that may help recruitment and retention of workforce talent in tight labor markets.
- ▶ Increase the buying power and consumption level for business products, in particular nonmedical goods and services, by improving the health and wealth of a community.
- ▶ Channel corporate philanthropy in a direction that will improve community relations, goodwill, or branding with the potential for a positive return for the business enterprise itself.
- ▶ Help create public and private partnerships and a multistakeholder community leadership team that can become the foundation for collaboration, cooperation, and community-based problem solving for many other issues affecting the business community, such as economic development and education.¹⁸

weight loss programs, and 78% provide financial incentives for weight loss success.

- ▶ 47% of plans will waive/adjust out-of-pocket payments for tests, treatments, and prescriptions upon participation in wellness coaching, and 86% provide financial incentives for achieving wellness goals.
- ▶ 96% of plans will waive/adjust out-of-pocket payments for tests, treatments, and prescriptions when members seek preventive care (immunizations, cancer screenings).

TAKE ACTION

ACTION ITEM #1: Create Cultures of Health at the Worksite

- ▶ Provide financial and organizational support for evidence-based health promotion interventions.
- ▶ Communicate consistently with workers in a variety of ways (web, print, social media, face to face) to encourage positive health behaviors.
- ▶ Promote social and organizational support from peers and supervisors by providing space and time for groups to informally gather and discuss healthy behaviors.
- ▶ Enforce policies, procedures, practices, and organizational norms that support a healthy lifestyle, such as nutritious food and drink options in vending machines and break rooms.
- ▶ Incentivize participation in health improvement activities such as the completion of a [health risk assessment](#).

- ▶ Create a common purpose that is dedicated to a healthier workforce and community.¹⁹

ACTION ITEM #2: Utilize Resources that Foster Health and Wellness

- ▶ The [National Healthy Worksite Program](#) is designed to assist employers in implementing evidence-based prevention and wellness strategies that lead to specific, measureable health outcomes.
- ▶ The [Lean Works](#) program helps employers plan, implement, and assess worksite obesity prevention and control programs.
- ▶ [Diabetes at Work](#) is an online resource specifically designed to address the management of diabetes in the workplace and includes resources, lesson plans, and fact sheets on various diabetes topics.

TAKE ACTION [continued]

- ▶ The toolkit on [implementing a tobacco-free campus](#), as part of the [Healthier Worksite Initiative](#), includes policy and comprehensive cessation services for employees.
- ▶ Immunizations are a safe and effective way to keep your family healthy. Encourage and remind your employees and their dependents to stay up to date on [recommended immunizations](#).

ACTION ITEM #3: Engage Local Plans & Employ V-BID

- ▶ Value-based insurance design (V-BID) comprehensively addresses the way health benefits are both structured as well as utilized by employees.²⁰
- ▶ Because lifestyle interventions and better chronic care management require active beneficiary engagement, V-BID helps steer consumers to make healthier lifestyle and health care decisions.²¹
- ▶ Survey health plans in your market area to determine their capabilities to offer and support V-BID such as enrollee incentives to adopt healthy behaviors. Using an [RFI process](#) will result in more systematic information, which can be compared across carriers.

ACTION ITEM #4: Empower a Healthier Community

- ▶ Talk the talk and walk the walk by expanding your commitment to health and wellness to the entire community.
- ▶ Align company wellness efforts with local efforts such as walkathons, weight loss group challenges, and community service projects, or sponsor a wellness activity for the entire community.
- ▶ Reach out to your local health department — they have tremendous expertise and resources and are deeply involved in community health efforts locally.
- ▶ Become a community health partner by joining a [Community Quality Collaborative](#) or similar multi-stakeholder, community-based organization working to transform health and health care at the local level, and share your best practices, lessons learned, and expertise with others.

- ▶ Review [The Guide to Community Preventive Services](#) when choosing programs and policies to improve health and prevent disease in your community. This comprehensive resource looks at effective program and policy interventions across a broad spectrum of health issues.
- ▶ Similarly, [What Works for Health](#) provides a compendium of policies and programs for implementation that can be filtered by health behaviors, decision makers, and evidence ratings.
- ▶ Conduct a health roadmap for your state. The [County Health Roadmaps](#) is an interactive web tool that incorporates county health data to tailor community health improvement solutions through factors that influence our health.
- ▶ Take advantage of the wealth of CDC resources available on [tools for community action](#) as well as examples of evidence- and practice-based health improvement strategies from communities participating in the [Strategic Alliance for Health Communities Putting Prevention to Work](#), and the [Division of Community Health](#).
- ▶ Show your support of public health and commitment to a healthier America by signing up as a partner organization of [National Public Health Week](#).

ACTION ITEM #5: Consider Joining Your Local Business Health Care Coalition

- ▶ A coalition can be a vehicle for meaningful change at the local level. Many coalitions leverage the voice and power of their employer purchaser members, often through public-private partnerships, by serving as community leaders working to advance change.
- ▶ Many coalitions are actively involved in community health and prevention efforts and can likely support your interests in population health improvement.
- ▶ Recently, as part of the NBCH Seed Grant Program, six communities finalized their [community health planning approach](#), including methodology, lessons learned, best practice recommendations, and action steps for replicating a community health action plan.

Endnotes

- 1 ["Healthiest and Least Healthy Counties Ranked in Every State 2012 County Health Rankings Show What Influences How Healthy Residents Are, How Long They Live," County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, April 2012.](#)
- 2 ["Building Healthier Communities by Investing in Prevention," U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, February 2011.](#)
- 3 ["U.S. Health Care Spending Now at \\$2.7 Trillion: Report", HealthFinder.gov, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, January 2013.](#)
- 4 ["Chronic Diseases The Power to Prevent, The Call to Control: At A Glance 2009," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, December 2009.](#)
- 5 [The Growing Crisis of Chronic Disease in the United States, Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease.](#)
- 6 [Health Communities Program Overview, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, February 2012.](#)
- 7 ["United Health Foundation's America's Health Rankings Finds Americans Living Longer but Unnecessarily Sicker", America's Health Rankings, December 2012.](#)
- 8 ["What is Public Health", American Public Health Association.](#)
- 9 ["The Power of Prevention," National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009.](#)
- 10 ["Public Health is ROI," National Public Health Week, American Public Health Association, 2013.](#)
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 [Public Health Infographic, American Public Health Association, October 2012.](#)
- 13 ["Obama Administration releases National Prevention Strategy," U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, June 2011.](#)
- 14 [Levi, J. "Employee Wellness: Beyond 9 to 5," Business Civic Leadership Center, U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, February 2013.](#)
- 15 [Creating a Health Workplace, National Public Health Week, American Public Health Association, 2013.](#)
- 16 [Young, S., Halladay, J., Plescia, M., et al. "Establishing worksite wellness programs for North Carolina government employees, 2008," Preventing Chronic Disease, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011.](#)
- 17 [Houy, M. "Value-Based Benefit Design: A Purchaser Guide," National Business Coalition on Health, January 2009.](#)
- 18 [Webber, A. and Mercure, S. "Improving population health: the business community imperative," Preventing Chronic Disease, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010.](#)
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- 21 [Houy, M. "Value-Based Benefit Design: A Purchaser Guide," National Business Coalition on Health, January 2009.](#)