

# LOWERING HEALTH CARE COSTS



## Create a workplace environment where health and wellness can flourish

Employers are in a unique position to create a culture of well-being for their employees through the use of communication tools, peer support, product innovation and incentives. It is important for leaders to consider employee health and wellness as a key component of their business. When it comes to health care, government leaders face a number of challenges.

In order to effectively engage employees in a healthy culture, local government leaders must lead the way. Elements to create a healthy work environment that can help reduce costs include tailored wellness programs, long-term strategy, incentives and programs that are easily accessible.

How do leaders navigate these challenges? By making health a priority and creating an environment where healthy living and wellness can flourish. When health and wellness are made a priority, managers and elected officials are better equipped to address the chronic health problems a local community faces.

At Cigna, we believe improving health is crucial to managing health care costs. On the employer side, we're seeing a continued focus on health and wellness improvement programs.

Creating a culture of well-being should be top of mind for your local government workforce. Here are three tips to help start the process.

### 1. Consider health and wellness an investment.

When budgets are tight, your first inclination may be to cut back on programs or resources. In order to successfully cultivate a culture of well-being, you need to look at health and wellness as a long-term investment – both in terms of people and community.

By setting aside funds dedicated to health and wellness programs, you're working toward better health for an entire community. Building a culture of well-being is a long-term investment in success. Wellness programs not only help improve the health of employees and help lower costs for local governments, they also help you attract and retain talent.

### 2. Show your support and lead by example.

A wellness strategy isn't something that should be implemented outside of normal business hours – it must be integrated within your local government's culture. Senior leadership, including upper-level management staff, needs to support a wellness program for it to be successful. If managers accept it, all employees are more likely to.

Some organizations showcase their commitment to employee health and wellness by stocking vending machines with healthy alternatives, providing health screenings, or establishing group fitness programs.

It's important that employees feel empowered to take an active role in their health and wellness. There are many ways to communicate your support. For example, regular email updates on setting health goals could be sent, or a monthly newsletter highlighting upcoming wellness activities could be distributed.

You can also encourage employees to see a health coach or participate in a group exercise class during the workday.

**Together, all the way.®**



### 3. Offer employees customized wellness programs.

All local governments have different health needs. There's no one wellness program that works for everyone, which is why it's important to customize a wellness strategy to meet the needs of employees.

A customized strategy can help reduce absenteeism, increase employee satisfaction, and boost workplace productivity, ultimately helping to decrease health care spending. Consider using technology to help your employees track their health and fitness goals and offer them incentives or “wellness dollars” for reaching their goals. Also, consider onsite health services.

**Cigna Onsite Health®** provides access to onsite health and wellness for the public sector. Through well-known wellness program providers, it can help clients bring biometric screenings and flu clinics to their worksite. It also offers onsite wellness coaching right where employees work.

As a wellness strategy is created, keep the goals in mind and make sure the program that is implemented meets those goals. Don't forget to evaluate the program on a regular basis and track key successes. Be sure to share those successes with the rest of your team.

