Public employees’ health status improving for 3rd straight year

Over 90 percent of public employee health plan members participate in wellness

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Sept. 23, 2015) – Just three years ago, about 10 percent of Kentucky public employees were participating in wellness programs – a stark contrast from today’s 90 percent rate.

“Under Governor (Steve) Beshear’s leadership, the Commonwealth has made Kentuckians’ health a top priority,” said Tim Longmeyer, Personnel Cabinet secretary. “The state’s largest employer and self-insured health plan is now able to report significant gains in wellness and preventive care participation.”

“We’re committed to helping each member make the best choices for their health,” said Department of Employee Insurance Commissioner Joe Cowles. “It is great to see the programs working and so many Kentuckians improving their health.”

Wellness program participation skyrockets
Since the launch of Kentucky Employees’ Health Plan’s (KEHP) wellness platform, HumanaVitality™, and the LivingWell program in 2012, wellness participation has jumped 675 percent. Nearly 158,000 members completed an annual health assessment or biometric screening this year. More than 132,000 members are enrolled in a health plan tied to wellness.

The number of plan members using a pedometer or other fitness-tracking device has increased from around 6,000 to nearly 17,000. HumanaVitality is also awarding almost 28,000 members top program rewards annually. Rewards such as hotel stays, Apple™ products and gift cards are easy for members to obtain when they reach silver, gold and platinum status levels in the program.

“Being a platinum status member, I know the benefits HumanaVitality offers,” said Raymond “Jackie” Cole, environmental health director for the Pike County Health Department. “My family purchased pedometers, apparel, Amazon gift cards and an iPad Air with our Vitality Bucks – all because we decided to improve our health. I am ahead of pace to complete my goal of running 1,200 miles this year, and I am working to make Pike County the healthiest county in Kentucky.”

Preventive screenings and program rates increase substantially
Ten major diagnostic conditions, including diabetes, heart failure, COPD, obesity, and chronic back and neck pain account for almost 80 percent of all claim costs.

“Reducing the high rates of chronic conditions has been a major focus for the health plan,” said Cowles. “Now we are seeing a substantial increase in cancer screenings and prevention program participation.”

This year, after a successful pilot phase, the plan became one of the first in the country to offer the national Diabetes Prevention Program to nearly 85,000 members who are considered at-risk of developing the disease. By the end of the year, nearly 300 KEHP members will have participated in the program.

“The program has been a lifesaver,” said Connie Armstrong, a Clinton County schools employee. “The program is the main reason that I have lost close to 40 pounds – and best of all, my blood sugar has dropped from high risk to normal.”

Health plan officials have also worked closely with Gov. Beshear’s kyhealthnow initiative to promote the executive branch tobacco-free policy and cessation resources. From June 2013 through June 2015, the number of plan tobacco users in the executive branch decreased by 16 percent. The decline resulted in a nearly 11 percent reduction in related claim costs.

In February 2014, Gov. Steve Beshear launched the kyhealthnow initiative, which established seven major health improvement goals for Kentucky. kyhealthnow targets seven major health goals to be met by 2019, focusing on increasing health insurance coverage; reducing the smoking rate and tobacco use; lowering the prevalence of obesity; lowering cancer deaths; reducing cardiovascular disease; treating and reducing dental decay; and reducing drug overdoses and mental health issues in Kentucky.

In the first year of the kyhealthnow initiative, more Kentuckians have health insurance, are covered by smoke-free policy, can access physical activity resources, seek care for heart disease and cancer prevention, and get dental services, according to the program’s inaugural annual report. In fact, the 2015 preliminary annual report cites measurable improvements in six of the seven major goals.

About the KEHP
The KEHP became self-insured in 2006 and is currently the state’s largest self-insured health plan. Plan membership totals around 160,000 plan holders and 266,000 covered lives. Mostly Kentucky residents who are public employees (state employees, teachers and school staff) and pre-65 retirees make up the health plan.

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