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Employers stand behind preventive care at the worksite

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A new Midwest Business Group on Health survey finds near universal (97%) agreement that employers have a role in offering such preventive care services as screenings and vaccinations.

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MBGH conducted the survey among its employer members in anticipation of health care reform's provision that, effective September 23, new insurance plans must provide preventative care without cost-sharing.

The top three reasons given by employers for providing such services are to reduce medical disability costs and prevent illness (94%), to keep employees healthy (84%), and to keep employees productive (59%).

"Employers are increasingly investing resources in preventive care and wellness programs to reduce health care costs and improve the health and productivity of their employees," says Larry Boress, MBGH president and CEO.

"We conducted this survey to help employers understand the importance of health management and wellness in managing health care costs and realizing healthy and productive employees. We hope health care purchasers will use the recommendations resulting from this research to increase utilization in areas that will provide the most bang for their buck," he adds.

Additional survey findings include almost half (48%) of employers utilize a high benefit cap of more than \$1,000 to encourage use of preventive services. Those services covered by more than 90% of survey respondents include: annual screenings, well child visits, pap smears, breast exams, prostate exams, colorectal cancer screening and employee assistance program services.

Employers state that the top barriers to get employees to use preventive benefits are a lack of understanding of their value (88%), no motivation to get healthy (56%), and difficulty taking time during the work day (47%).

MBGH recommends that employers encourage employee use of preventive services through an increased focus on education and communication, removal of barriers to access and better alignment of incentives.

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