

BUSINESS NEWS

MORE EMPLOYERS ARE INTEGRATING HEALTH CARE BENEFITS DUE TO BETTER HEALTH OUTCOMES



A new study released by Anthem reveals a growing trend in the design of health care benefits that is helping to create better care, lower costs and create a more overall satisfied workforce for employers of every size. According to latest edition of the biennial Integrated Health Care report, more than 71 percent of the 222 employers with 100+ employees surveyed are either actively integrating or considering integrating their medical, pharmacy, dental, vision and / or disability benefits under their employer's health and wellness programs in the next five years due to the positive impact integration has on their employees. This represents an 11 percent increase from the study conducted in 2016.

"At Anthem, we are championing the power that claims data and analytics can have when leveraged through integrated health care and I'm encouraged that more and more employers are adopting this approach," said Nick Brecker, president of Anthem's Specialty Business. "By addressing 'whole person health' we can identify and communicate opportunities to positively impact employees' health, provide them with a simplified experience and lower their health care costs."

Anthem studies have determined that when medical, pharmacy, dental, vision and disability benefits are delivered in silos that have little or no interaction between them it can often leave employees and health care providers with a disconnected view of total body health. By comparison, integrated health care connects benefits data to the employer's health management program based on member claims and population insights, which provides a fuller picture that delivers better health outcomes and cost efficiencies.

The report found that among surveyed employers who are actively integrating or considering integrating products nearly 100 percent of them reported integrating pharmacy, vision, dental and / or disability benefits with medical. This represents an overall increase of 11 percent from a 2016 survey. The cost and ease of administration remain important business imperatives to employers, but there is a noticeable shift to creating and retaining a more satisfied and healthier workforce as a driver toward integration. The "happiness factor" is a workforce advantage with 88 percent of employers agreeing that integrated health care benefit programs make an organization a place where people want to work.

Meanwhile, 90 percent of employers agree that offering integrated health care benefits makes a compensation package more attractive, and 86 percent of employers agree that integrated health care benefits reduced employee turnover / attrition. While employee engagement remains one of the main measures for success, for many employers that are integrating or considering integrating health care benefits, a small but growing number (19 percent up from eight percent since 2016) reported initiating their own integration programs because "it's the right thing to do" for their employees.

"It's clear that the impacts of employee health and benefits extend beyond the medical care costs," said Brecker. "Employees and employers are looking for solutions that

connect medical care with pharmacy, dental, vision, disability and other benefits programs, so that employees can get the support they need to improve their overall well-being, satisfaction and productivity."

The environment for acquiring and retaining employee talent has grown increasingly more competitive, especially with the recent lower unemployment numbers, and as more employers are seeking and competing for the same talent. As a result, benefits offerings, including integrated health care, are becoming a crucial consideration and potential differentiator in attracting talent. Integrated health care continues to gain momentum in what matters to employees and can create better care, more cost efficiencies and help with employee retention.



Pictured left: CVAG, grand prize winners, small organization category in 2018. Pictured right: JW Marriott Desert Springs Palm Desert, grand prize winners, large organization category in 2018. (Photos by Gina Graves).

COACHELLA VALLEY WORKPLACE WELLNESS AWARDS OPEN FOR NOMINATIONS

HARC, Inc., the Coachella Valley's premier source for community health and wellness data, announces the nominations for the 4th Annual Coachella Valley Workplace Wellness Awards are now open. The awards are in recognition of exemplary workplaces that prioritize employee health and wellness and encourage others to do the same.

"Workplace wellness benefits include increased productivity, decreased absenteeism, improved morale, decreased health care costs and decreased legal costs," says Dr. Jenna LeComte-Hinely, Executive Director for HARC. Employers are less interested in return on investment (ROI) measurement and instead are focusing on employee health and well being, according to a recent research study done by International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans.

Organizations eligible for and encouraged to participate in the awards competition include businesses, nonprofits, schools and governmental organizations. HARC will award four small organizations (1-100 employees) and four large organizations (101+ employees) in the following categories:

- Nutrition: e.g., walking clubs at work, healthy food options in vending machines, weight loss support groups, free health screenings, etc.
- Safety/Environment: e.g., ergonomic interventions, safety reward programs, tobacco bans, reducing exposure to toxins, etc.
- Wellness/Mental Health: e.g., flextime policies, enhanced employee recognition, supportive supervisors, team-building, etc.

Grand Prize Winner: exemplifies all three areas listed above.