

## **More Employee Engagement is Aim of Virginia's New Health Initiative**

In the past decade, the Commonwealth of Virginia has faced health care challenges similar to other states – increasing costs, overweight employees and members, and a risk-averse culture that hinders member responsibility for individual health. Two years ago, the state health benefits program partnered with the Governor and General Assembly to implement an ambitious, strategic initiative to encourage employees to take a more proactive role in their own health. In July 2013, Virginia adopted an integrated strategic total population health strategy featuring a culture of health, aligned plan design strategy, and the necessary internal and vendor capability tactical infrastructure.

This spring, Virginia's initiative was one of eight finalists for the Virginia Chamber of Commerce's 2014 Game Changer in Employee Health Award, recognizing the innovative nature of the program's strategic design.

Implementation of the initiative began on July 1, 2013, when the Commonwealth launched a comprehensive program with four key components:

- A consumer directed health plan (CDHP), with Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA) incentives for wellness activities,
- Employee, early retiree and spouse premium reductions for health assessment and biometric screening (HA/BMS) engagement incentives,
- Preventive and Value Based Insurance Design, and
- A single total population health management (TPH) vendor for state plans.

Now in effect for almost a year, the new culture progressively encourages more employee engagement. The program was designed to effect sweeping culture change to improve the health of state plan members using a number of engagement tactics. These include monthly premium reductions for completing a health assessment and biometric screening; funding incentives tied to the CDHP's HRA, where participants and spouses can earn extra HRA funds by engaging in a variety of health activities; a single source health improvement/engagement vendor, ActiveHealth, with a single population data warehouse that captures population risk stratification indicators from all sources; a portal providing program-wide access to education on clinical issues, access to online nurse support for episodic care and coordination of wellness campaigns; and additional value-based insurance design programs for asthma, COPD and hypertension.

Communications during annual health benefits Open Enrollment introduced the initiative, and included targeting of human resource professionals, benefits administrators and crucial assistance from other office areas within the Virginia Department of Human Resource Management. A three-pronged effort of written, electronic and face-to-face employee communications helped to increase employee awareness and engagement. In addition, the CommonHealth wellness program internal

resource team aligned its efforts with the ActiveHealth team to develop a culture of employee wellness and engagement.

Preliminary measures of employee engagement – the health assessment and biometric screening participation – are excellent compared to available benchmarking data for first year results. In year one, 53 percent of employees and 45 percent of spouses have completed the health assessment, and 40 percent of employees and 31 percent of spouses have completed the biometric screening.

In addition to engagement, the Commonwealth's strategy has also included employee decision-making tools, from a web-based interactive plan decision support tool called "ALEX" to a full range of education, engagement, campaign participation and coaching tools through the MyActiveHealth portal, to additional education, provider selection, quality and cost information and 24/7 nurse line resources through the health program's two plan administrators, Anthem and Aetna.

During the initiative, Virginia has sought several partners under the strategic umbrella. Recent examples include:

- Active participation in and support for the Virginia Healthcare Innovation Committee and its initiatives, including the All Payers Claims Database and the Waste Calculator pilot program;
- Facilitation of community partnerships encompassed in the Strategic Plan request for proposals (RFP) structure during the 2012-2013 implementation phase; and a
- Pilot partnership with Health Diagnostic Laboratory (HDL) to determine the value of advanced biometric testing methods, coaching advice and primary care physician consultation in health improvement.

The value and return on investment (ROI) will be determined by results over the next three to five years. A critical aspect for program performance and future plan design is an expanded data warehouse capability that facilitates targeted engagement and provides the sources to track health improvement metrics.

Future tactics will involve continued extensive communications, culture reinforcement and participatory example, policy and practice changes as suggested by the results and health status data, and employee engagement.