

UnitedHealthcare and Kaiser Permanente Help the State of Colorado Lead the Way Toward Better Health

“

“As one of the largest employers in the state, we have a unique opportunity to improve the health of state employees and lead the way as a wellness-focused employer.”

Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper

”

The Results

40%
participation

650%
increase in health
assessment completion

>\$100K
awarded to engaged
employees

Healthy living is a point of pride for the State of Colorado. Yet its population is not immune to rising rates of obesity. Although it's still the lowest in the nation, Colorado's adult obesity rate jumped from 7 percent in 1990 to more than 20 percent in 2011.* Faced with this disturbing trend, the State of Colorado recognized the importance of leading the state toward better health — starting with its own employees.

The Challenge: Launching a Statewide Health Initiative

The challenge for Kathy Nesbitt, Executive Director of the Department of Personnel & Administration for the State of Colorado, was finding a way to address the needs of a diverse workforce, which includes everyone from public transit drivers and corrections officers to park rangers and academics. “We needed a program that was unified, but not ‘one-size-fits-all,’” says Nesbitt. The program had to provide a seamless experience for all state employees — regardless of their health plan — and give them compelling reasons to make long-term behavior changes.

The CaféWell Solution

In a solution sponsored by Kaiser Permanente and UnitedHealthcare, the State of Colorado adopted Welltok's Health Optimization Platform™, CaféWell, to provide a single online platform to link its statewide health initiatives to rewards programs. The program launched in July 2013, with Governor John Hickenlooper introducing it on the steps of the state capitol building. The public kick-off generated statewide buzz — a crucial element in driving engagement and building momentum.

CaféWell is designed to integrate healthy habits into employees' daily routines — like drinking more water, walking regularly, eating healthier, reducing stress and getting to a healthier weight. The platform offers a variety of health activities, including the State of Colorado's highly successful Reach for the Peaks program, in which employees track their daily steps via a pedometer or mobile app. Employees are rewarded for participating, and they have access to a wealth of educational resources, including recipes, articles, videos and health coaches.

*Source: Colorado Health Report Card

Overcoming the Engagement Hurdle

Motivating employees to take part was a top concern for state officials. Together with its plan sponsors and Welltok, the State of Colorado designed an incentive strategy that aligned the right rewards with the desired actions and behaviors. For example, one key objective was to increase the number of state employees completing a health assessment.

Nesbitt comments, “We know that health assessments are an important first step in getting people the resources they need to stay healthy.” To encourage employees to complete the assessment and keep participating in the program long-term, the state offered monthly premium reductions — an extremely effective approach that led to a more than six-fold increase in assessment completion.

The Key to Success

Facilitating collaboration among the key stakeholders — state officials, human resources representatives, union leaders and health plans — was a critical part of the State of Colorado’s success. With enthusiastic support from both UnitedHealthcare and Kaiser Permanente for a unified program, Nesbitt found it easy to adopt a central solution to meet the needs of all employees.

“UnitedHealthcare’s goal is to help all Coloradoans live healthier lives through incentives and innovative programs, and we are grateful for the opportunity to work with Gov. Hickenlooper to help state employees get and stay healthy,”

Robert Beauchamp, M.D., Chief Medical Officer,
UnitedHealthcare of CO

“This program helps create and promote a culture of total health — something that’s in our Kaiser Permanente DNA.”

Eric France, M.D., Kaiser Permanente Chief of
Population Care and Prevention Services

