



*Get the Watch Working: Integration Across Benefits
Purchasing, Health Promotion and Health Protection*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | AUGUST 2016



INTEGRATED
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About IBI

Founded in 1995, the Integrated Benefits Institute (IBI) is a national, nonprofit research and educational organization focused on workforce health and productivity. IBI provides data, research, tools and engagement opportunities to help business leaders make sound investments in their employees' health. IBI is supported by more than 1,100 member companies representing over 20 million workers.

For more information about IBI's programs and membership, visit ibiweb.org.

Acknowledgments

This report was prepared for the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), Office of Extramural Programs, under contract 212-2014-M-59174, by the Integrated Benefits Institute, San Francisco, California.

The author of this report is Kimberly Jinnett, PhD. The author thanks Rene Pana-Cryan, PhD, Director, Economic Research and Support Office, NIOSH Office of the Director, for her leadership, support and advice throughout the development of the interview guide, early results discussion and final report development. The author would also like to thank Tim Bushnell, PhD, of the NIOSH Economic Research and Support Office for his review and commentary on the interview guide and preliminary findings.

The Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation has also developed a questionnaire on this same integration topic. This reference, the Workplace Wellness Grant Program Annual Case Study, is available at www.bwc.ohio.gov/downloads/blankpdf/SH-30.pdf, and was accessed July 15, 2016.

Finally, the author would like to thank the IBI Board of Directors for nominating leading experts to participate in the interviews, as well as the interviewees for their frank and open discussion of the promising efforts and remaining challenges to successful integration of health promotion and health protection activities.



Executive Summary

By and large, employers invest in integrated efforts not just to improve employee health outcomes but also to mitigate costs associated with health-related work disruptions such as safety incidents and work leaves due to chronic illness. Such integrated employee health investments make good business sense and are beneficial for employee health and performance as well.

To deepen understanding around employers' thinking on integration, how their approach functions in practice and the consequences for employee health and business value, IBI conducted interviews with senior-level health officials from nine different employers. The experts interviewed had primary responsibility for health promotion and/or health protection functions within their organizations, but not direct authority over benefits-purchasing decisions. In each of the nine organizations, there were three basic functions related to integrated employee health investments:



Benefits Purchasing: responsible for determining coverage and buying benefits for employee health across a range of coverage types, including medical, pharmacy, disability and workers' compensation



Health Promotion: responsible for implementing wellness initiatives primarily aimed at preventing illness and disease by sponsoring activities such as fitness programs, biometric screenings and healthy food options at work



Health Protection: responsible for preventing worker injury and illness through safe practices and policies, including safety trainings and ergonomic design

We found that in practice, however, typically these functions take place in separate business departments, often with very little joint activity or communication among those handling health promotion and health protection functions and those purchasing group health benefits. The efforts of health promotion and health protection teams overlapped with varying degrees of structural and functional integration.

Key Findings: Implications for Employers

When benefits purchasing, health promotion and health protection do not work together, workforce health is compromised and time, money and energy are wasted. Here are three ways to get teams working in sync:

Build allies: Talk to other departments and get senior leaders involved in developing integrated strategies around employee health and wellbeing.

Find common ground: Meet colleagues where they are and map workforce health to business performance.

Hold each other accountable: Measure and review outcomes to track progress and make informed decisions.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR WORKFORCE HEALTH & BUSINESS VALUE



BENEFITS PURCHASING

Determining coverage and buying benefits for employee health, including medical, pharmacy, disability and workers' comp



HEALTH PROMOTION

Implementing wellness initiatives, including fitness programs and healthy food options at work



HEALTH PROTECTION

Preventing worker injury and illness through safe practices and policies, including training

THEY'RE MOVING DIFFERENTLY

Health Promotion and **Health Protection** are in sync, but **Benefits Purchasing** is often moving in the opposite direction.



By not working together, workforce health is compromised, and time, money and energy are wasted.

HOW?



Benefits Purchasing may change healthcare benefits to save costs to employers.



Employees may forgo necessary care if it is too expensive or not covered.



Work disability, sick days or underperformance can undercut employer cost savings.



Benefits Purchasing, Health Promotion and **Health Protection** need to work together to understand what benefits coverage is needed and how to leverage existing and additional programs to fully support workforce health.

GET THE WATCH WORKING

BUILD ALLIES

Talk to other departments and get senior leaders involved.

FIND COMMON GROUND

Meet colleagues where they are and map workforce health to business performance.

HOLD EACH OTHER ACCOUNTABLE

Measure and review outcomes to track progress and make informed decisions.



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