



City of Long Beach
Working Together to Serve

Office of Gerrie Schipske
Councilwoman, Fifth District
Memorandum

R-24

Date: April 17, 2012

To: HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

From: Councilwoman Gerrie Schipske, Fifth District
Councilmember Rae Gabelich, Eighth District
Councilmember Steven Neal, Ninth District

Gerrie Schipske
RG
SN

Subject: **AGENDA ITEM:** Helping Our City Employees Get Healthy: Utilization of Anthem Blue Cross Healthy Employees Programs to Reduce Health Care Costs

DISCUSSION:

Annually, the City budgets approximately \$55.6 million dollars for healthcare coverage. The City of Long Beach has recently changed its healthcare coverage provider and contracted with Anthem Blue Cross, whose premiums are adjusted based upon the number of medical claims submitted.

The largest costs of healthcare for any employer are a result of chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease. Obesity and use of tobacco products add to increased medical costs and loss of productivity at work.

The City Council has recently passed several community health initiatives stating: "The City of Long Beach should do all it can to encourage exercise, nutritious food, and healthful lifestyle choices." While this policy focus has been entirely on our schools and community, helping our own city employees improve their health is one of the best long-term strategies for reducing the City's health care costs. When employees are healthy, productivity increases and insurance premiums or total medical costs may be reduced.

Anthem Blue Cross offers a number of services to employers to engage employees in getting and staying healthy. The attachment outlines not only the free programs available for enrollees but also a guide for employers on how to implement these programs at the workplace. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/85779608/Employer-Guide-to-Wellness-in-the-Workplace>

Residents can utilize **America on the Move** – a non-profit website that provides information on how to get and stay healthy, including a free email alert reminder that gives you daily tips on healthy lifestyles. <https://aom3.americaonthemove.org/>

We Need to Be the Leaders:

Anthem Blue Cross recommends that in order for a “healthy employee” effort to be successful, the City will need to: *“build a lasting culture of health at your worksite. And the best way to begin is to get your senior leadership on board. Ask them to get behind promotions and support and approve employees’ access to wellness resources. Your leaders can be your best wellness champions by sending emails directly to employees encouraging them to participate. Other ideas can include adding healthy tips to regular communications, sponsoring or participating in wellness challenges and even sharing success stories of their own path to wellness.”*

The City of Long Beach has a number of resources it can utilize to coordinate this employee wellness effort, including but not limited to: the joint labor and management health care benefits committee, the Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services, the Human Resources Department, and our local medical centers: Memorial, Community, St. Mary and Pacific.

The City needs to send the signal that the health of our community depends upon the wellness of all of those who live, study and work here. We need to set the example in “building a lasting culture of health” with our own employees.

FISCAL IMPACT:

- Anthem Blue Cross does not charge for these programs.
- America on the Move does not charge for its programs.
- Expenditures for employee health care continues to increase. This effort will result in a decrease in those expenditures by improving the health of City employees.

RECOMMENDATION:

By motion of the City Council, direct the City Manager to establish an Employee Wellness Committee to utilize the employee wellness programs offered without charge by the City’s health care insurance provider, Anthem Blue Cross.