As healthcare costs continue to rise, organizations are seeking strategies to help improve the health of their workforce as a means to better manage these increases. Yet, despite offering a number of benefits and programs, many employers still face challenges engaging employees to take steps toward better health. We believe that organizations may need to take a different approach in order to better meet the needs of their employees and impact both their outcomes and medical costs.

**Counteracting Fragmentation with Integration**

Traditionally, healthcare benefits, including wellness programs, have been fragmented and disconnected, as multiple vendors offer overlapping programs that do not communicate with one another. This leads to frustration, inefficiency, and poor utilization by employees, as well as redundant costs for employers. Further, people often face health-and-billing-related problems at the same time, requiring a multifaceted approach to effectively resolve each issue in total.

To remedy this, organizations are implementing holistic, integrated programs that focus broadly on employees' overall well-being. This approach goes beyond physical wellness to also consider employees' emotional, financial and social health. In addition to meeting the growing demand for convenient, effective benefits services, this more complete view addresses employees' needs and provides a personalized, integrated solution to help them resolve issues and reach their goals.

**Personalizing Healthcare**

Spanning the continuum of employee needs in this way can make the experience of dealing with a health issue more seamless for the employee and ensure that they take best advantage of their benefits. The result will save employees time and enhance on-the-job productivity. In a world where time is money, the employer also benefits. For example, someone with a chronic condition may need help finding a doctor, but they may also be experiencing stress related to dealing with a serious medical condition and paying for needed care. In an integrated model that emphasizes well-being, the employee can quickly and easily get help locating an in-network provider in their area, access financial wellness services and tools to help them find the most cost-effective medication, and understand their out-of-pocket costs. Connecting these resources makes it much easier to identify related needs, gaps in care, and appropriate next steps to help employees get the care and support they need.

Employees are also more likely to use a benefit that fits their preferences, so in addition to providing tailored services to meet their unique needs, offering access to programs through multiple channels (i.e., text, phone, website, or mobile app) can further drive engagement and utilization. Integrating services so employees don't have to spend hours contacting different vendors makes it more likely that they will take advantage of available help.

**Leveraging Data to Drive Engagement**

Just as each employee has a different set of needs, each organization's program will vary in ways that reflect the unique characteristics of their workforce. In order to inform the structure of an integrated well-being program, it is critical to understand which issues are most important to the organization's employees. Surveying employees and reviewing aggregate health data...
data, including medical claims data, prescription drug use, biometric screening results, and personal health assessments, can help steer the direction of a program based on the prioritized health needs of the employee population. In advanced models, workers' compensation and disability data contribute additional understanding of ongoing and anticipated needs.

Data can also be utilized on a continuous basis to identify employees at risk, stratifying the group so that appropriate interventions to address gaps in care can be implemented. By leveraging the initial aggregate data as a baseline, it is possible to get a view of the impact of interventions and measure year-over-year trends in medical costs, clinical outcomes, and productivity. This approach also allows the employer to tweak the mix of benefits and well-being offerings to meet the changing needs of an evolving workforce.

Taking steps to shift the focus of workplace health and wellness from a traditional standalone approach to an integrated matrix of services can improve employee health and well-being, enhance engagement, increase productivity, and tackle some of the primary issues that drive healthcare costs. An integrated approach to benefits and well-being improves efficiency, reduces costs, drives greater employee engagement, and produces better outcomes for both employees and employers.

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