

## Some companies offer employees financial incentives to participate in wellness programs.

On the front page of its Health section, the [Washington Post](#) (10/14, HE1, Gearon) reports that "many large companies...are adding financial incentives to their wellness and disease management efforts." A recent Kaiser Family Foundation survey found that next year, "somewhere around 35 percent of [large] employers will offer such incentives" to take part in their wellness programs, according to Tracy Watts of benefits consulting firm Mercer. The survey also "found that nearly 80 percent of large firms offering wellness programs believe they improve health, and 68 percent say they reduce costs." Such incentives and wellness programs "can bring substantial payoffs for employers -- up to \$3 in savings for every dollar spent over three years, says Mercer principal Missy Jaeger." While most employers "have tried to curtail their expenses by reducing benefits or shifting more of the costs onto workers," such "continuous cost shifting and downgrading benefits not only pinches employees' pockets but depresses their morale." Still, "disease management and wellness programs make some employees nervous" because of "possible breaches of privacy."

**Report indicates employers insured nearly 71 percent of all workers in 2006-2007.** The [AP](#) (10/13, Clark) reported that the Economic Policy Institute released a report last week that found that throughout the nation, "63 percent of the population under 65 years old was covered by employer-sponsored health insurance and almost 71 percent of all workers were insured by their employers" in 2006-2007. Meanwhile, the report ranked New Mexico "worst in the country for the percentage of residents who are covered by health insurance through their employers," with Texas and Mississippi ranking second and third worst respectively. Only "50.7 percent of New Mexico's population under 65 years old was covered by employer-sponsored health insurance" during the same period, and "59.1 percent of all workers were insured by their employers over the same period."

The [Pittsburgh Business Times](#) (10/13) added, "Over the past six years, Pennsylvania workers have lost employer-provided health insurance coverage at a rate greater than the national average" according to the report. Data indicated that "70 percent of [Pennsylvania] residents, or about 7.4 million people, had employer-provided coverage in 2006- 2007, down 5.7 percent from the 2000-2001 figure of 7.9 million people." Throughout the nation, "the decline was 4.7 percent."

Similarly, the report indicated that "Texas workers have lost employer-sponsored health insurance coverage at a rate greater than the national average," according to the [San Antonio Business Journal](#). Sixty-two "percent of Texas workers had employer-provided coverage in 2006-2007. This is down 4.7 percent from 2000-2001."