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Employers Believe Telehealth Impacts Health and Cost, and Few Small Employers Offer Wellness Programs Per Houston Business Coalition on Health Survey

Employees may see increased costs and reduced benefits in 2017

HOUSTON – NOVEMBER 10, 2016 – Nearly half of employers have or are considering a decrease in medical benefits for employees and 75% have or are considering increasing employee premiums according to a new poll of employers by the Houston Business Coalition on Health (HBCH). HBCH is a non-profit multi-stakeholder organization representing more than 1.5 million employer-sponsored lives nationally.

“While employers still face skyrocketing costs for healthcare, they remain committed to offering benefits for their workers and families,” said Chris Skisak, PhD, executive director for HBCH. “We conducted this research to gain an understanding of medical benefit plan offerings including plan design, total cost and employee contributions of employers in Houston to ensure our programs and other initiatives help them meet their goals.”

Additional findings:

- Only the largest employers offer a wellness program as less than 20% of those with 1,000 employers have programs
- 40% of employers have implemented and another 50% are considering offering telehealth and telemedicine benefits
- 75% of employers offer or are considering voluntary benefits to supplement health coverage
- 75% of employers are considering or have implemented a price transparency tool for employees
- 32% of employers are considering a Medical Home delivery model (primary care that is patient-focused, comprehensive, team-based, coordinated, accessible, high-quality and safe) for healthcare
- 70% of employers are not considering a plan that includes an Accountable Care Organization (a network of doctors and hospitals that shares financial and medical responsibility for providing coordinated care to patients in hopes of limiting unnecessary spending)
- Only 7% of employers are considering a private insurance exchange (an online health insurance marketplaces for a company's employee base) to purchase medical insurance

“It’s clear that chronic condition management, health navigation, well-being and payment reform are all issues of importance to purchasers,” Skisak added. “Given the focus on improving cost and quality outcomes, we anticipate that many of our members will be considering the Center of Excellence model where they contract with healthcare service providers that specialize in a particular type of program or service that produces better patient results at a lower cost than other providers.”

Survey methodology

The inaugural 2016 employee benefits survey is based on 52 employer responses from Houston area employers representing almost 100,000 Houston based employer-sponsored lives. Employers were asked to summarize 2016 medical benefit plan offerings including plan design, total cost and employee contributions. Smallest respondent had 102 employees and the largest over 25,000 employees with 87.5 percent being self-funded and 12.5% fully-insured. Survey services were donated by Higginbotham.

About Houston Business Coalition on Health

The non-profit [Houston Business Coalition on Health](#) is a leading resource for Houston employers dedicated to providing health benefits at a sustainable cost while improving the quality and employee experience of their delivery through effective benefits design. Formed in 2013 as a merger between the former Houston Wellness Association and Houston Business Group on Health, HBCH is an employer-centric organization focused on sharing of evidence-based strategies and practices to maximize benefits investments to improve health and health care.

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