



# Preventing Diabetes in the Workforce

A call to action for employers BY JILL M. HUTT

**WHY SHOULD EMPLOYERS CARE** about preventing diabetes in the workforce? Health care spending for people with diabetes is 2.3 times greater than for those without diabetes.

Diabetes is a serious condition affecting over 37 million Americans—96 million adults in the U.S. have prediabetes, and 84 percent don't know they have it<sup>1</sup>. Diabetes is devastating physically, emotionally, and financially, causing serious complications such as heart disease, kidney failure, and blindness. Diabetes can result in reduced productivity, absenteeism, unemployment from chronic disability, and premature mortality.

Among Delaware adults, 12 percent have diabetes, and an additional 9 percent have prediabetes—a condition where a person's blood sugar is high, but not high enough to be diagnosed with diabetes. Equally of concern, 37 percent of Delaware adults have obesity and 32 percent are overweight, conditions associated with prediabetes. Other risk factors include age greater than 45, family history of diabetes, and low physical activity levels. Annual diabetes and prediabetes costs in Delaware are \$1.1 billion<sup>2</sup>.

Employers can address prediabetes in the workforce by offering the CDC-endorsed National Diabetes Prevention Lifestyle Change Program (National DPP)—proven to prevent or delay type 2 diabetes. Participants learn to make healthy food choices, increase physical activity, and manage stress. These lifestyle changes can cut their risk

of developing type 2 diabetes by 58 percent (71 percent for those 60 or older). According to the CDC, outcomes have shown up to five-to-seven percent loss in body weight, reduced hypertension and improved cardiovascular health.

The National DPP is offered in-person or online and is covered by many health insurers. Even without insurance coverage the cost is economical—typically \$400-\$700 in a pay-for-performance program linked to key milestones for enrollment, completion, and weight loss. By offering the program, employers can realize a value on investment (VOI) in direct and indirect financial benefits. Many public and private employers reported success in offering the National DPP<sup>3</sup>.

In 2020, the City of Wilmington took action to address diabetes and

The Greater Philadelphia Business Coalition on Health, in collaboration with the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, supports employers in promoting the National DPP to the workforce. Act now and learn more about this cost-saving program by visiting:  
<https://youtu.be/NVRkJJZAlw>  
<https://tinyurl.com/2ypcrr4n>  
<https://tinyurl.com/3pk2d522>

***“The National DPP lifestyle change program generates a high return on investment. Financially, the program is a no-brainer. However, if you think about infusing joy into the workforce, the return is even bigger.”***

prediabetes in its workforce by implementing the National DPP with the YMCA of Delaware, which is covered by the City's health plan, Highmark. The program resulted in participants achieving an average five percent weight loss and a projected \$151,000 savings for the City. According to Dany Bourjolly Smith, employee benefits manager with the City of Wilmington, "The National DPP lifestyle change program generates a high return on investment. Financially, the program is a no-brainer. However, if you think about infusing joy into the workforce, the return is even bigger."

A program participant stated, "I cannot recommend this program highly enough. I lost 45 pounds and gave a testimonial to one of the classes. This program changed my life." ■

1. [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

2. *Delaware Behavioral Risk Factor Survey, 2003-2020*

3. [www.chronicdisease.org](http://www.chronicdisease.org)



**Jill M. Hutt** is vice president of member services at the Greater Philadelphia Business Coalition on Health, which serves employers in southeastern Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey, and Delaware.



**Employers working together can prevent diabetes and drive change!**

The Greater Philadelphia Business Coalition on Health seeks to increase the value of health benefit spending for the region's employers by improving workforce and community health, increasing healthcare quality and safety, and reducing healthcare costs. We represent employer interests to address population health priorities and to ensure that when healthcare is needed it is accessible, affordable, equitable, high-quality, and safe.

GPBCH serves employers in southeastern Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey and Delaware, representing 1.5 million lives. We thank our Delaware employer members for their support of our mission: City of Wilmington, ChristianaCare, Delaware Statewide Benefits, University of Delaware and YMCA of Delaware.

**To learn more visit [www.gpbch.org](http://www.gpbch.org), or contact Jill Hutt at [jhutt@gpbch.org](mailto:jhutt@gpbch.org).**

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