CCRCs Lead Senior Living For Wellness Approach, Execution

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Health care providers, including dozens of senior living communities and CCRCs, largely give their employees low marks when it comes to their own health care. As a result, many are starting to implement in-house initiatives to improve their outcomes, with CCRCs largely leading that charge.

Among senior living providers, CCRCs are more likely to have funded positions dedicated to wellness initiatives compared to freestanding independent living, assisted living and long-term care providers, at 30% versus 10%, according to results of a first-of-its-kind survey [1] of employee wellness programs among senior living and hospital providers, launched by Mather Lifeways, LeadingAge, the American Seniors Housing Association and Caring Communities.

CCRCs are also more likely to report employee wellness program participation rates of more than 50% compared to freestanding independent living, assisted living and long term care communities. However, senior living providers reported significantly lower levels of employee participation in wellness programs compared to hospital providers.

When asked what grade providers would use to describe their employees' overall health, 69% of all providers gave their employees a grade of "C." Providers with more than 50% employee participation in wellness programs are more likely to give their employees a grade of "B" compared to providers with less participation at 27% versus 7%.

Work/life balance, financial security and childcare were found to be topics of greater concern for senior living providers than hospital providers.

The results involved a national sample of 350 health organizations, representing 843 individual senior living communities, long-term care communities and hospitals, with a total of nearly 134,000 employees.

Of the 770 individual senior living communities represented, 66% are CCRCs, 20% are freestanding independent living or assisted living communities and 14% are freestanding long term care communities. A total of 73 hospitals are represented in the survey, and 72% of the hospitals are part of large healthcare systems.

The report also offers recommendations to develop, refine, implement and evaluate effective employee wellness initiatives; a profile of leading senior living providers with high rates of participation in employee wellness programs; and a checklist identifying more than 30 key questions for use by organizations in evaluating strengths and opportunities regarding next steps in employee wellness program efforts.

"Employee wellness programs are considered an investment in a organization's most important asset – their employees," researches write in the study. "Employees are more likely to come to work, be motivated, and be productive when they are in optimum [health]."

Organizations with effective employee wellness programs most frequently use rewards to achieve positive outcomes, followed by using a combination of rewards and penalties, survey results show.

Mather LifeWays partnered with the other survey commissioners in fall of 2013 to collaborate on the national survey.

In the study, researchers point to the projected growth of health care spending as an indicator of a growing field, creating the need for an evaluation of employee wellness programs. Health care spending is estimated to surpass $4.2 trillion in 2018 compared to $2.5 trillion in 2009 and $75 billion in 1970, researchers say.

The 92-page final report was published in March and is available via download [1] for free.

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[1] survey: **http://www.matherlifewaysinstituteonaging.com/health-care-professionals/national-survey-of-employee-wellness-programs/**
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