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COVID-19

Supporting physical and emotional health is a top priority for most employers as 64% believe COVID-19 will have a moderate to large impact on employee well-being. More than three in four (77%) are offering or expanding access to virtual mental health ...

May. 26, 2020



Companies are making enhancements to their health care, well-being and leave programs, according to a new Willis Towers Watson survey examining the business impact of COVID-19 on health benefits. The survey, conducted from April 20 – 23, found that nearly half of respondents (47%) are enhancing health care benefits, 45% are broadening well-being programs, and 33% plan to make changes to paid time off (PTO) or vacation programs. And while some companies are reducing costs in other

ways — furloughs, pay cuts and reductions in 401(k) matching contributions —

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being spectrum.”

Supporting physical and emotional health is a top priority for most employers as 64% believe COVID-19 will have a moderate to large impact on employee well-being. More than three in four (77%) are offering or expanding access to virtual mental health services. Maintaining physical health is also important with 60% of employers offering new easy-to-implement virtual solutions such as virtual workouts to support employees who work from home. Another 19% are planning or considering these solutions. Half (50%) promote healthy nutrition and weight management for at-home employees, and 25% are planning or considering adding these programs.

The survey found a majority of employers don't expect their health care benefit costs to rise substantially. Fifty-seven percent of respondents anticipate a small to moderate increase in costs, 24% expect no increase or decrease, and only 3% expect a large increase. A separate Willis Towers Watson actuarial analysis found employer health care benefit costs could fall by as much as 4.5% this year as demand for nonessential medical care has declined during the COVID-19 crisis. Over six in 10 (61%) employers have made or will make changes to their benefit programs over the next six months with two out of five (38%) planning to revise their health care strategies for 2021.

Employers are also prepared to help employees with COVID-19-related costs. Seventy percent have waived telehealth costs, 69% have expanded reimbursements for over-the-counter drug costs through flexible spending accounts or health reimbursement arrangements, and 62% have waived or reduced COVID-19 treatment costs.

When it comes to leave programs, 42% of employers have made or are planning to make changes to PTO, vacation and sick-day programs to enhance employee flexibility and lessen the buildup of accrued days by year-end. To minimize lost days,

24% of employers are planning to increase carryover limits, and 21% are allowing

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change and generate a great deal of goodwill. By taking positive actions around health, well-being and leave, employers are putting people first. And that's an investment that's likely to build employee loyalty, raise engagement and enhance future productivity.”

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