

More information about the new Wellness Initiatives

The State Health Plan for Teachers and State Employees (“Plan”) will implement comprehensive wellness initiatives to support healthy lifestyles, as outlined in Senate Bill 287

Some Commonly Asked Questions:

1.) *Why has the Plan focused on tobacco use and weight management when there are many other health conditions that are also serious and costly?*

Tobacco use and unhealthy diet/physical inactivity are the two leading causes of preventable deaths in North Carolina. The Plan’s NC HealthSmart programs currently provide services and supports that will allow members to take appropriate action to improve their health. Health Coaches are available now to assist eligible* members with managing chronic diseases and healthy lifestyle support. You may call a Health Coach at 1-800-817-7044, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In addition, the NC Quitline is available for tobacco cessation assistance. Pharmacy benefits offer tobacco cessation and weight management medications. Speak to your doctor for counseling and information regarding medication options.

2.) *Has the State Health Plan explored some ways to offer incentives to members who engage in healthy lifestyles?*

The Plan is looking at cost-effective incentive options to support healthy lifestyle behaviors. Tools and resources have been developed by the Plan and other partners to highlight the benefits of healthy lifestyles, including healthy eating, physical activity, tobacco use cessation, and stress management. NC HealthSmart materials and information are available on the State Health Plan Web site at www.shpnc.org.

Many state worksites offer wellness programs. Contact your HBR to find out more about your worksite wellness programs.

3.) *How will the Plan implement these new programs?*

The legislation includes a provision for the Plan to ask members to self-report tobacco use and weight status during annual enrollment. The Plan is currently assessing procedures and rules around the tobacco and weight management programs, and will make these available for public comment prior to program implementation. Privacy and respect will be important values in all aspects of the member wellness initiatives.

The legislation requires the Plan to inform members about the specifics of the initiatives no later than October 1, 2009.

4.) *Who’s eligible for the member wellness initiatives?*

Members eligible for program participation include active employees, retirees who are not on Medicare, and dependents. Members on COBRA are also eligible for these programs.

The State Health Plan will provide regular updates on these initiatives at www.shpnc.org.

*Eligible members are those with the State Health Plan as their primary insurance.