

For Immediate Release

Northeast Business Group on Health Releases Employer Guide to Address Health Care Needs of Lower-Wage Workers with Diabetes

Guide includes action steps for employers

NEW YORK, February 12, 2020 – Northeast Business Group on Health (NEBGH) has released “**Diabetes and Lower-Wage Workers**,” a new employer guide to help HR and benefits leaders address the health care needs of lower-wage workers with diabetes and the rising costs associated with them.

More than 30 million Americans – roughly one in 10 – have diabetes, making it one of the most prevalent diseases in the U.S. Studies show the cost of diagnosed diabetes has reached \$327 billion annually, with health costs for individuals with diabetes more than twice those without. Low socioeconomic status doubles the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes, which is more common among racial and ethnic minorities and people who are less educated, and more likely those who are lower-wage earners.

“When it comes to diabetes, employers have much at stake in terms of employee health and productivity, and cost,” said Candice Sherman, CEO of NEBGH. “Diabetes is a challenging illness to manage in the best of circumstances, but for lower-wage workers, it can be especially daunting because of financial stress, family caregiving burdens, and living conditions in their communities. Employers really need to be aware of the obstacles their lower-wage workers are facing and take steps to help them.”

The Guide, *Diabetes and Lower-Wage Workers*, discusses several factors that need to be considered for managing diabetes such as communities with fewer healthy food options, stress, ethnicity, and culture. It also illustrates how diabetes can affect multiple systems in a body and provides information on the challenges lower-wage earners face in terms of access to care, out-of-pocket health care expenses, and the potential impact of high-deductible health plans, which are often favored by lower-wage employees because of their smaller premiums.

The Guide also features a two-page list of actions employers can take to help lower-wage employees with diabetes. These include, but are not limited to:

- Giving paid time off during working hours or granting an annual half-day off for an annual check-up.
- Providing access to on-site or near-site biometric screenings or confidential health risk assessments to give employees insights into their risk for diabetes and other health issues.
- Making affordable health care accessible by designing benefits with benefits equity in mind or offering counseling services to help employees pick the best plan for them.

- Making insulin and other glucose-lowering agents exempt from deductibles with no or very low patient cost sharing.
- Educating employees on financial wellness and providing savings support to help lower-wage employees with limited resources manage their budgets.
- Helping to remove barriers to care by offering transportation services or reimbursement for public transit or rideshare costs for health care appointments.
- Using payroll data to assess how many employees fall into different wage categories and review affordability of premiums in each category.

“Lower-wage workers are more vulnerable to chronic diseases like diabetes, and their circumstances make it tougher to do what is necessary to control their diabetes. Social determinants of health play a major role in helping people do what is needed to improve their health, and employers are increasingly recognizing this. We believe our new guide can help employers provide the best and most affordable health care for individuals diagnosed with diabetes,” concluded Sherman.

The guide is available free of charge to all employers and the public at large and can be accessed [here](#).

About Northeast Business Group on Health

NEBGH is an employer-led, multi-stakeholder coalition that empowers members to drive excellence in health and achieve the highest value in healthcare delivery and the consumer experience. NEBGH employer/purchaser members cover 6 million lives in the U.S. and 10 million globally.

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