

# Health Care Reform Offers Boost to Wellness Programs

Wellness programs will reach more people in more workplaces, healthy choices will become easier choices because of healthcare reform legislation

Health Promotion Advocates, a non-profit grass-roots advocacy organization, announced that provisions in the health care reform bill will address the underlying causes of poor health habits. The bill signed by President Obama explores how wellness concepts can be integrated into federal policy for agriculture, transportation, education and other areas. Also, these provisions are expected to increase the number of businesses that offer wellness programs, increase the number of employees who participate, more effectively track programs, and improve overall program effectiveness.

Dr. Michael O'Donnell, Editor-in-Chief of the American Journal of Health Promotion and Chairman of Health Promotion Advocates projected that "the provisions in the health care reform legislation will accelerate the evolution of health promotion by a decade. Millions of people will have better access to programs that can help them quit smoking, manage stress, lose weight, and improve fitness. Additionally, these programs will help our nation create environments that make healthy choices easier choices."

Health Promotion Advocates worked with Democratic and Republican members of Congress to develop these provisions. The allowances first appeared in the Health Promotion FIRST (Funding Integrated Research Synthesis and Training) Act, which was introduced by Senators Lugar (R-IN) and Bingaman (D-NM) and Representatives Schakowsky (D-IL) and Burgess (R-TX); and in the Health Workforce Act, which was introduced by Senators Harkin (D-IA) and Cornyn (R-TX) and Representatives Blumenauer (D-OR) and Bono-Mack (R-CA). Supported by more than one hundred other organizations and several thousand grass roots advocates, the provisions in these acts include:

1. Development of a national health promotion plan
2. Enhanced health promotion research
3. Technical assistance to enhance evaluation of workplace health promotion programs
4. Regular periodic surveys on workplace health program prevalence and components
5. Grants to pay a portion of the cost of comprehensive workplace health promotion programs for small employers
6. Allowing employers to offer employees a premium discount of up to 30%, for positive lifestyle practices or participation in health promotion programs

Additional wellness provisions not developed by Health Promotion Advocates include grants to help communities improve health, coverage of preventive services in Medicare, Medicaid and private insurance, coverage of wellness services in Medicare, a national campaign to engage people in healthy lifestyle habits, and nutritional labeling in restaurant menus.

*Health Promotion Advocates*

## ABOUT HEALTH PROMOTION ADVOCATES

Health Promotion Advocates is a 501(c)-4 non profit grass roots organization created in 2004 to integrate health promotion concepts into national health policy. It has approximately 2,400 grass roots advocates located in all of the 50 states. Its members include health educators, psychologists, dieticians, exercise physiologists, physicians, nurses and others who manage wellness programs in workplace, clinical, educational and community settings. (<http://healthpromotionadvocates.org>).

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