

# An employer's guide to promoting **health equity**



When your employees are at their best, your business can be at its best. However, there are a number of barriers that can impact an employee's ability to be their healthiest self, such as their race and ethnicity, education, income, zip code and living conditions, access to reliable and affordable transportation and childcare, gender identity and sexual orientation.

**So, what can you do to help remove these barriers? Here are 8 ideas to consider:**

- 1. Make prevention easier to access.** Hold onsite flu and COVID-19 vaccine clinics and give paid time off to get them. If space is a limiting factor, ask nearby businesses to team up with you to provide adequate, accessible space for all employees.
- 2. Bring the doctor's office to your office.** Designate a room in the office where onsite employees can use telehealth and telemedicine services in private without leaving work. This can be especially helpful to those who have recurring virtual mental health appointments.
- 3. Nourish healthy habits.** At least 1 in 10 New Yorkers experience food insecurity.<sup>1</sup> Make healthy snacks such as fruits and vegetables, nuts, and yogurt, and, if possible, gym equipment available to support nutrition and physical activity for those with limited access at home. For remote workers, sponsor memberships in a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) food share program or home fitness programs.
- 4. Get creative with your benefits package.** Consider providing and contributing to pre-tax spending accounts beyond traditional health HRAs, FSAs and HSAs. Specialized spending accounts for things like transportation and childcare expenses can be a great way to make getting to work and doctor's appointments more affordable.
- 5. Give the gift of time – and health.** Provide paid time off specifically for getting annual wellness exams, screenings, and vaccinations without the fear of missing a shift or needing to arrange transportation in the middle of the workday.
- 6. Alleviate cost burdens for lower earners.** 24% of covered employees are considered "underinsured," meaning they have health coverage but not the financial resources to afford their plan's out-of-pocket costs.<sup>2</sup> Consider a salary-based contribution model for health insurance premiums to give a little extra help to those who need it.
- 7. Amplify community resources.** Our local community is full of supportive organizations who specialize in removing barriers to wellbeing. Invite them to present to your team to raise awareness and connect those in need to available help.
- 8. Help employees become advocates for their teammates.** Everyone should feel physically and emotionally safe at work. Review your company's discrimination policies and make participation in required anti-racism, antidiscrimination, and violence education mandatory.

**When we all work together to help everyone be as healthy as possible, everybody benefits.**

To learn more about what Excellus BlueCross BlueShield is doing to remove barriers for our members and the community, visit [ExcellusForBusiness.com](https://www.ExcellusForBusiness.com).



<sup>1</sup> New York Health Foundation, NYHealth Survey of Food and Health, August 2022

<sup>2</sup> The Commonwealth Fund, 2019

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