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## **Gov. Heineman Announces Nebraska Becomes First State Government to Win C. Everett Koop National Health Award**

(Lincoln, Neb.) Gov. Dave Heineman today announced the State of Nebraska wellness program, “wellnessoptions,” became the first state program to earn the coveted [2012 C. Everett Koop National Health Award](#), which includes stringent requirements for demonstrating health improvements and cost savings.

“I’m thrilled Nebraska is the first state to win this prestigious award,” said Gov. Heineman. “Due to health improvements and increased use of preventive screenings, the State of Nebraska is controlling healthcare costs which benefit the State’s workforce and Nebraska taxpayers across the entire state. This award is further evidence of how hard our employees have worked to improve their health.”

After just three years, the State of Nebraska is enjoying a \$4.2 million reduction in claims, strong participation rates and high satisfaction among employees. The resulting return on investment in the program is above the industry average: For every \$1 spent on the program, \$2.70 is returned in health care savings (based on an independent review of claims data).

As the U.S. faces the problem of rapidly rising health care costs, coupled with an epidemic increase in obesity rates, Koop Award winners demonstrate that forward thinking employers can simultaneously improve their workers’ health and reduce spending.

“For the U.S. to continue to be an economic leader worldwide, supported by a healthy and productive workforce, more companies need to implement evidence-based health promotion and disease prevention programs,” said Dr. Ron Goetzel, president and CEO of The Health Project. “The good news is that when done right, these programs not only make workers healthier, they can also produce a positive return on investment”

In addition to receiving the 2012 C. Everett Koop Award, the State of Nebraska wellness program has also previously been awarded two other prestigious national awards: the [2011 Gold Well Workplace by the Wellness Councils of America](#) and the [2011 Innovations Award from the Council of State Governments](#).

C. Everett Koop award applications are independently reviewed and rigorously scored by some of the nation's leading experts and researchers in the area of health management. Reviewers place the most scoring emphasis program evaluation and results. The State of Nebraska is joined by only one other 2012 C. Everett Koop Award winner (L.L. Bean, Inc.) and three honorable mention programs. Thirteen other award applications did not meet the award requirements. More information about the C. Everett Koop National Health Award winners is available at [www.TheHealthProject.com](http://www.TheHealthProject.com).

When the State of Nebraska launched the program in 2009, it became one of the first states to offer an integrated wellness initiative that is tied to health plan coverage. The Wellness health plan features 100 percent coverage of preventive health care, lower premiums and value-based health and prescription offerings.

Private employers have implemented health management programs for more than three decades in an effort to improve employee health and lower health claims costs. But the State of Nebraska is one of only a few public employers that embraced the strategy of offering health improvement opportunities to lower employee health care costs. HealthFitness, a leading provider of health management services, supports the program with confidential annual health risk assessments, on-site biometric screening, health coaching and lifestyle improvement programs.

The wellness program has more than doubled the rate of participants completing preventive screenings, which enabled detection of conditions at an earlier stage, while helping participants learn about their personal health risk factors that can lead to unhealthy outcomes downstream. More than 500 cases of early-stage cancer were detected for the first time through the program, resulting in early treatment for the condition. Other areas of health care savings include:

- Lower prescription utilization—a 3 percent reduction in 2011 among *wellnessoptions* enrollees as a result of improved lifestyles;
- Fewer emergency room visits;
- Fewer hospital admissions; and
- Shorter hospital stays.

“Our message for Nebraska businesses, schools, families, and individuals is that wellness works every time,” said Gov. Heineman. “Prevention and wellness efforts lead to healthier employees, increased productivity, better employee satisfaction and lower future health care costs.”

A recently published Wellness Council of America (WELCOA) [Case Study](#) showcases the program's components and strategy that the State of Nebraska took to lower costs while improving the health for 13,500 employees (including retirees and COBRA participants) and 7,000 spouses. To view the WELCOA case study about the State of Nebraska's successful health management program, view 'Free Resources' at [www.welcoa.org](http://www.welcoa.org).