

Healthcare Reform Update: Grants for Workplace Wellness Programs

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) creates a grant program to assist small businesses to provide comprehensive workplace wellness programs. Grants will be awarded to eligible employers to provide their employees with access to new workplace wellness initiatives. The grants will be awarded **beginning in 2011** with \$200 million appropriated for a five-year period. An eligible employer is an employer that:

- Employs fewer than 100 employees who work 25 hours or more per week, and
- Did not have a workplace wellness program as of March 23, 2010 (date of PPACA's enactment).

The PPACA requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services to develop program criteria that are based on research and best practices. A comprehensive workplace wellness program must be made available to all employees and include:

- Health awareness initiatives (including health education, preventive screenings, and health risk assessments)
- Efforts to maximize employee engagement (including mechanisms to encourage employee participation)
- Initiatives to change unhealthy behaviors and lifestyle choices (including counseling, seminars, online programs, and self-help materials)
- Supportive environment efforts (including workplace policies to encourage healthy lifestyles, healthy eating, increased physical activity, and improved mental health)

Employers may submit applications that include a proposal for a program that meets the criteria and requirements as described in the PPACA and developed by the Secretary.