

## Increasing Wellness & Prevention through Public Policy Changes

**The Issue:** Keeping people as healthy as possible for as long as possible can improve quality of life, relieve strains on the health care system and reduce costs for individuals, employers and taxpayers. Wellness and prevention includes many things including: smoking cessation, diet, regular exercise, chronic disease management, health screenings, adherence to treatment regimens, and regular doctor visits. Iowans for Wellness and Prevention believes the health care system should be reoriented to support these healthy and preventive measures to increase people's quality of life and reduce overall health care costs.

**2008 Legislation - Wellness Tax Credits:** IWP and the Greater Des Moines Partnership joined together in the 2008 session to promote legislation that would have provided tax credits for small businesses who have qualified wellness programs for their employees. IWP and the Partnership supported legislation that was based on a similar law already in place in Indiana. This legislation would set up a tax credit program for small businesses that have qualified wellness programs in place for their employees. Small businesses were defined as businesses which have 100 or fewer employees. The tax credit would be equal to 50% of the cost of the wellness program, up to \$300 per year per employee. Qualified wellness programs would focus on measurable results: health risk assessments to identify risk factors (cholesterol, blood pressure, etc), smoking cessation, weight loss, exercise, immunizations. Because funding was not available for the proposal this year, the legislature instead passed language requiring the Iowa Department of Public Health to work with the Iowa Department of Revenue and interested parties to write a new proposal for small business wellness tax credits. The IDPH must submit this report to the legislature in December 2008 for consideration during the 2009 session.

**2007 Legislation - Small Group Insurance Premium Incentives:** Iowa law governing health insurance for small employers had prohibited insurance carriers from giving a small employer lower rates based on claim experience. IWP believed that this was a deterrent for small employers to implement wellness programs. In the 2007 legislative session, IWP supported legislation that would allow insurance carriers to lower the premiums for small businesses who had successful wellness programs that resulted in reduced costs.

**Next Steps:** We will be working in the interim with the Iowa Department of Public Health to write the wellness tax credit proposal, and then asking the legislature to enact the proposal in 2009. If you would like to be involved with this effort, please contact IWP at (515) 226-0698 or [info@iowans4wellness.org](mailto:info@iowans4wellness.org).