



A Message from the President of the National Business Group on Health

The National Business Group on Health is pleased to announce the publication of *A Purchaser's Guide to Clinical Preventive Services: Moving Science into Coverage*, an important resource on preventive services. Developed in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the *Purchaser's Guide* translates clinical guidelines and medical evidence into lay terms, providing large employers with the information they need to select, define, and implement preventive medical benefits.

The *Purchaser's Guide* arrives at a time when the prevention of disease, injury, and disability is more important than ever. The U.S. healthcare system is in crisis; while the United States has the world's highest annual healthcare costs, it ranks far below most other industrialized nations on measures of population health. Furthermore, research has shown that nearly half the care Americans receive is not aligned with either evidence-based medicine or clinical guidelines.

Employers understand the need to prevent illness and disability if they are to have a healthy, productive, and engaged workforce. Each year, millions of Americans die of preventable illnesses and injuries that were caused by modifiable health behaviors. Researchers estimate that 75% of all healthcare costs stem from *preventable* chronic conditions such as type 2 diabetes and hypertension. Many of the leading causes of short- and long-term disability such as kidney disease, some types of cancer, and complications of pregnancy are also preventable. Preventable health problems result in substantial indirect costs for employers including lost productivity, absenteeism, and turnover. For some conditions, like alcohol misuse, which costs American businesses \$134 billion each year, indirect costs outpace direct treatment costs.

Disease prevention and early detection hold the promise of improving our nation's health and reducing healthcare costs. Clinical preventive services help people avoid disease by reducing their health risks. Clinical preventive services can also catch disease in its early stages when interventions are more effective and less expensive. Historically, preventive services have been poorly defined in employer-sponsored medical benefit plans and coverage for preventive services has been less robust than that for acute care services. Differential coverage and a lack of emphasis on prevention have resulted in the underutilization of many important clinical preventive services such as tobacco use treatment and colorectal cancer screening.

Increasing our investment in high-impact and cost-effective clinical preventive services will turn the promise of improved health and reduced cost into a reality. All purchasers, public and private, need to devote more attention to prevention in order to curb the caseload and costs of chronic conditions. In the current resource-constrained environment purchasers should cover and promote the most beneficial preventive services. The *Purchaser's Guide*, built upon sound evidence, presents the National Business Group on Health's recommendations for preventive service benefits and provides tools employers can use to evaluate and expand their current preventive service offerings.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Helen Darling".

Helen Darling, President