



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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**STATE EXPLORES WORKSITE WELLNESS
AS A COST SAVING MEASURE**

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) Healthy Hawai'i Initiative (HHI) hosted a State Agency Worksite Wellness Meeting today. The Worksite Wellness Meeting brought together state agency directors and representatives, insurance providers, and unions to learn about comprehensive worksite wellness programming, to discuss the potential benefits and identify strategies necessary for meeting the needs of Hawai'i government agencies and their employees.

Hawai'i State Government is the largest employer in Hawai'i with over 50,000 civil service and exempt employees. Because Hawai'i pays for a large portion of its employees' health care benefits, the government has a considerable investment in the well-being of its current and retired workforce. Over the next 30 years, Hawai'i's state and county governments will need to come up with as much as \$11.1 billion to pay for the retiree healthcare benefits they have promised civil servants.

"One of the state's greatest assets is a healthy and productive workforce," said Health Director Chiyome Fukino, M.D. "To succeed in improving the health of employees, collaboration and partnership are necessary from state agencies, the health plans and vendors that serve them, and the unions that represent them."

According to Larry Chapman, a nationally recognized expert on employee health management programs, "Hawai'i government agencies can build comprehensive worksite wellness programming to benefit their employees and also reduce costs for the state. It's a win-win situation."

A study conducted in 2004 calculated adult-obesity attributable medical expenditures in Hawai'i to be \$290 million dollars. Effective health promotion and disease prevention programs, components of worksite wellness programs, can lead to reductions in health costs and improvements in productivity. Wellness programs have shown a return on investment (ROI), with an average ROI of \$4.30 in health care and absenteeism costs.

In the upcoming months, the Department of Health Healthy Hawai'i Initiative and Larry Chapman will work with state agencies and their partners as a task force to develop program recommendations and potential pilot projects.

The State Agency Worksite Wellness Meeting is a part of the Healthy Hawai'i Initiative's social-ecological approach to reduce the burden of chronic disease in Hawai'i by promoting physical activity, healthy eating and living tobacco free. For more information about the Healthy Hawai'i Initiative visit www.healthyhawaii.com.

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