



State of Illinois
Department of Central Management Services

2021 NASPEs EUGENE H. ROONEY, JR. AWARD

Be Well Illinois





BeWell@illinois.gov 

www.illinois.gov/BeWell 

www.facebook.com/BeWellIllinois 

The Illinois Department of Central Management Services (CMS) Bureau of Benefits (Benefits) is committed to the overall health and wellness of the more than 440,000 State employees, retirees, and their dependents, whom we serve. To continue our health-focused efforts, the CMS Bureau of Benefits launched a new wellness program to address the various health needs of our health plan participants, mind, body, and spirit alike. This program is the first of its kind for the State of Illinois (State).

In 2019, CMS recognized the need to engage participants more actively in their own health and wellness and began to explore what that should look like and how to achieve this goal within such a broad and diverse population. Two themed, in-person events across four locations were held from December 2019 through February 2020, but the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic forced us to reevaluate our strategy and truly be creative. Throughout 2020, the wellness program strived to find innovative ways to engage participants where they were: home, work, or a combination of the two. By leveraging existing partnerships and utilizing creative messaging, programming included two mental wellness-focused webinars per month, a virtual benefit fair and virtual 5k/10k as well as wellness content on our existing Benefits website. The program successfully engaged members to build a culture of health awareness and highlight the importance of care givers and those who may be isolated during the pandemic. In addition, the program helped to increase access to vital health prevention information, including COVID-19 resources, to many participants who had not been previously engaged. The wellness efforts and improvements made earned CMS the 2020 Aetna Workplace Well-being, Gold Level Award.

In partnership with our ten (10) health carriers and with the support of the Office of the Governor and CMS Executive leadership, Benefits officially launched the **Be Well Illinois** wellness program in January 2021. **Be Well Illinois** was developed using a comprehensive approach to wellness and incorporates educational resources and activities designed to improve physical, financial, and mental health and raise awareness about the benefits of healthy eating, exercise, and culturally conscious and relevant programming. Each month, the program sponsors targeted events and provides new resources, including but not limited to weekly motivational emails, articles, wellness webinars and resources on the **Be Well Illinois website**, [Facebook](#) and via direct email communications to participants to support their overall health and wellness goals.

While **Be Well Illinois** is in its infancy stage, the program continues to grow and create opportunities to strategically support a healthier, more informed, and aware workforce within the State of Illinois. It is our hope that these efforts not only improve the wellness of employees but also has a lasting impact on their families and communities to build a healthier Illinois. We hope that everyone will “Be Well, Live Well, Stay Well.”

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Nominations from dues-paying states are considered for eligibility. Nominated leaders and programs should have a positive effect on the administration of state human resource programs. A state's central human resource department or line agency human resource operations may administer nominated programs.

Programs and projects must have been operational for at least six months and must be transferable to other states. Selection criteria are based on the questions asked on the award application. Included in this packet are the specific criteria for each award and their categories. Nominations are encouraged in all areas of human resource management administration.

Additionally, please attach a one-page summary of the program and prepare a narrative answer for the questions listed below. Do not send supporting documentation. Provide a narrative answer for each of the following questions.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

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NOMINATOR INFORMATION

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DETAILS

1. Please provide a brief description of this program.

At the beginning of 2021, the Illinois Department of Central Management Services (CMS), through the Bureau of Benefits (Benefits), launched **Be Well Illinois**, the State of Illinois' (State) new comprehensive wellness program, to support employees and retirees on their journeys to live healthier, fuller lives – in mind, body, and soul.

The program was designed to build a culture of wellness within the State and each month we share educational resources including wellness webinars, monthly health awareness causes, financial wellness, healthy eating, and exercise programming.

2. How long has this program been operational (month and year)?

Be Well Illinois officially launched January 1, 2021, kicked off by a 21-day countdown and wellness/engagement challenge, promoted on Facebook and email in December 2020.



3. Why was this program created? (What problem[s] or issues does it address?)

“We believe that healthier employees lead longer, more active and fulfilled lives, inside and outside the workplace,” said CMS Director Janel L. Forde. “Our priority through **Be Well Illinois** is to make wellness opportunities more accessible to plan members and help them get the most from their benefits.”

Be Well Illinois is a new program that was developed to help State employees, retirees, and other wellness plan members to create and maintain an active lifestyle and gain easy access to mental health awareness materials and treatment, financial services, nutritional information and group and individual exercise programs. These benefits, in addition to primary care visits, health screenings and immunizations like the flu shot, are offered at no-cost to plan participants. While our various healthcare plans offer many wellness resources individually, we felt it was important to develop an “umbrella” program to bring these tools and resources to the forefront to encourage members to engage in their own health and wellness.

As the State agency that oversees both hiring and benefits for State employees and retirees, it is important for CMS to support our members’ overall health and wellness to improve employee recruitment and retention. In addition, chronic diseases are the leading causes of death and disability in America and a leading driver of health care costs. Most chronic diseases can be prevented by eating well, being physically active, avoiding tobacco and excessive drinking, and getting regular health screenings, so providing awareness, resources and encouragement to make these lifestyle choices is likely to also have a downstream financial benefit of reduced health care costs.

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4. Why is this program a new and creative method?

Be Well Illinois builds on the improvements CMS made in wellness over the last several years, to help employees, retirees and their dependents take a more active role in managing their healthcare and day-to-day wellness. An enhanced focus on improving the State's comprehensive wellness program resulted in CMS receiving the [2020 Gold level AETNA Workplace Well-being award in August of 2020](#). This award recognized the State's ongoing commitment to expanding access to workplace wellness resources and programs. CMS still sought to provide a wider variety of wellness content and resources to employees and retirees at State agencies, universities, boards, commissions and local government units, as well as retired teachers and community college employees and we determined that our unique challenge needed a creative solution. Creating the **Be Well Illinois** brand, with a one-stop [website](#) and [Facebook](#) community allows us to provide this focused and fresh content and resources to all our members and their dependents, as well as the opportunity to build wellness brand awareness and buy-in, separate from routine insurance information.

New programming included some of the highlighted activities below:



Became the first state in the nation to install a Higi smart station in a state building. Higi machines allow workers to privately, conveniently and regularly check the kinds of vital signs doctors use to monitor patient health, such as weight, body mass index (BMI), pulse, and blood pressure and follow up with medical action as needed. Illinois now has 77 Higi machines installed in facilities statewide, including 26 correctional facilities, with plans to install at least 100 Higi machines total; [\(Press Release\)](#)



Launched a pilot "Director's Challenge" program within CMS in 2020 to challenge employees to be their best self in 2020 and beyond, through goal-setting, mindfulness, physical activities, emotional wholeness, spiritual and/or community motivations, and mental health projects;



Partnered with HealthLink in June 2021 to provide an exciting and unique virtual event for Men's Health Month. **In Your Neighborhood, featured world-renowned boxer Sugar Ray Leonard** and focused on his inspiring story from poverty to 5-time world champion and recovery from addiction to wellness;



Established a **2021 Health, Wellness and Equity series with virtual events in February for Black History Month (Exploring Disparities in Black Heart Health)**, April for Minority Health Month (#VaccineReady) and a planned August event on the Social Determinants of Health;



In October 2020, CMS and Health Alliance **hosted the State's first annual virtual 5k and 10k**. 1,775 members across more than 30 agencies, universities and retirement systems participated with 1,032 completing their selected challenge and more than **60 million steps taken**;



In March 2021, the Illinois Department of Central Management Services (CMS), **Aetna and Quest Diagnostics®** **partnered to offer a non-invasive way to screen for colorectal cancer** to many health plan participants. Detection kits were mailed directly to more than 25,000 eligible members – 1 early detection case could possibly save a life and avoid ~\$245K per case; [\(Press Release\)](#)



As CMS also oversees the State's Deferred Compensation Program of \$5.4B across almost 57,000 participants, we initiated a **partnership relationship with the Illinois State Treasurer's office to implement and promote the Illinois Financial Wellness Hub**, launched in June 2021, to provide education and resources to improve State employees' and retirees' financial wellness;



Collaborated with agency-specific wellness teams to determine the best ways to support their members, including ordering Be Well Illinois swag that meet specific agency needs in order to increase wellness program participation and buy-in (i.e., branded swag items included agency specific items like clear totes for correctional staff, reflective knit safety hats for fleet and facility operations etc.).

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Be Well Illinois regularly meets with and challenges all of our health carriers to determine what additional resources, tools or challenges we can bring to our members to help them move the needle on their health and wellness. This continued engagement encourages carriers to be creative and competitive to bring new and innovative opportunities to the table, which we are then able to vet and provide to our members, as determined.

5. What was the program's startup costs? (Provide detailed information about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)

CMS was able to implement **Be Well Illinois** with existing resources partially due to the generous support of each of our 10 carriers. During the planning and brainstorming period, we implemented an approach called "Benefits Bonanza" where we encouraged and challenged each carrier to be creative and strategic, providing up to three (3) discreet ideas for partnership, two (2) big ideas – prioritized by timing and/or virtual vs. in-person, and identifying any months, issues or particular interests or alignment with **Be Well Illinois** given each carrier's book of business and/or general wellness strategy. This discussion gave our carriers the opportunity to build on existing strengths, while focusing additional resources and efforts on new and innovative ideas, specific to the State's population. Our framework can be shared broadly and is transferable to other organizations.

Purchases of goods specifically to support the wellness program are covered by a wellness fund which exists within one or more health plan contracts. Our Wellness Program Manager was a funded position, although vacant for several years, which we were able to transition to primarily support the **Be Well Illinois** program. Marketing and IT support are part of ongoing relationships which already exist in the State and CMS. Broader expansion will likely be driven by redistributing cost savings/avoidance.

6. What are the program's operational costs?

Be Well Illinois has no additional program costs.

7. How is this program funded?

Be Well Illinois is funded via regular State personnel costs and a wellness fund which exists within one or more health plan contracts.

That said, CMS notes that in 2019 the State negotiated over \$600M in 4-years healthcare health savings via labor (33 union) negotiations. At the same time, CMS also reactivated the Joint Labor Management Advisory Committee to collaboratively achieve additional savings while continuing to deliver high quality healthcare to our covered lives. Our intention was to put "wellness" at the forefront of all healthcare conversations and to help stakeholders recognize and appreciate the importance of preventative care (wellness) and avoided costs.

8. Did this program originate in your state?

9. Are you aware of similar programs in other states?
If yes, how does this program differ?

Be Well Illinois differs from other programs because we operate in a cooperative collaboration with our many health plan carriers and vendors to increase awareness and access to wellness services throughout the State, for over 440,000 active employees, retirees and dependents across a broad spectrum of wellness topics. **Be Well Illinois** established a [website](#) for a snapshot of program offerings like wellness webinars, the latest information from health plan partners, monthly health awareness education and much more. We also created a [Facebook](#) community to keep up with Be Well Illinois events, special wellness challenges and messages to keep us all

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motivated as we strive to be well, live well and stay well in 2021 and beyond. The creation of **Be Well Illinois** is a paradigm shift in not only how we manage our healthcare options, but also how we communicate and support active employees (and retirees) as well as promote our benefits as recruitment enhancement.

10. How do you measure the success of this program?

Initially, we are measuring **Be Well Illinois** success based on:

- Participation and sign-up statistics;
- Testimonials; and
- Social media and email engagement.

Long-term, we intend to measure **Be Well Illinois** success with multiple data-driven sources such as:

- Health-indicators;
- Service(s) utilization;
- Outcomes;
- Staff surveys, feedback and self-reporting;
- Device tracking; and
- Quarterly report and analysis of overall plan participation and success data.

11. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

We continue to improve our new **Be Well Illinois website**, most recently adding a “Kids Corner” section and additional enhancements are in progress. We continue to improve our Facebook page, as we recently premiered our first “Facebook Life” event and strive to provide wellness challenges for participants to engage in virtually. We provide twice monthly wellness webinars, focusing on various topics with medical experts. Focused on COVID-19-friendly employee engagement events. We continue to work with carriers to develop and provide relevant resources and engagement opportunities. We are also working to further collaborate with agency and university wellness programs to ensure we are providing relevant and useful resources and opportunities for their members. We are excited to continue to change and grow.

Relevant links:

- [Be Well Illinois page](#)
- [Be Well Illinois Facebook page](#)
- **Press Releases**
 - [State of Illinois Earns Gold Level 2020 Aetna Workplace Well-being Award](#)
 - [Higi Milestone - CMS Health Pilot Sees 100,000th Wellness Screening As Providers Expand Program Reach](#)
 - [Be Well Illinois Launch Announcement](#)

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