

# URAC announces accreditation standards for Comprehensive Wellness programs

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*Program evaluation and performance measures part of URAC's Comprehensive Wellness Accreditation standards*

**Washington, D.C. Nov. 19, 2008** – URAC announced today that its Board of Directors has approved standards and measures for its Comprehensive Wellness Accreditation program. These innovative standards reinforce and support the commitment that employers and wellness organizations have to ensuring the health and productivity of America's workforce. Comprehensive Wellness is the first new accreditation program from URAC with integrated program evaluation and performance measurement components.

"Worksites have a powerful impact on individuals' health, since most adults typically spend half or more of their waking hours at work," said Garry Lindsay, managing senior fellow-senior program officer for the Partnership for Prevention. "Having credible standards for comprehensive health management programs, including worksite wellness, will help bring a needed focus on prevention that benefits companies and workers alike. Addressing the true drivers of health care costs is critical to prevention centered health reform, as advocated by Partnership for Prevention."

The Comprehensive Wellness Accreditation program answers the need for national standards to measure the effectiveness of these programs that focus on health promotion, chronic disease prevention and health risk reduction.

"URAC's Comprehensive Wellness Accreditation standards and measures are an excellent structure to guide wellness organizations in their pursuit of quality, while still allowing the market to evolve and improve," said Gail Levenson, RPh, CDE, CGP, director of health management services, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. "Purchasers are seeking ways to measure the effectiveness of wellness programs. Accreditation is a critical tool employers and purchasers can use to evaluate vendors on a level playing field."

The new Comprehensive Wellness standards and measures were developed by an expert advisory group of employers, health plans, consumer representatives, public benefits organizations, health care professional associations, providers and wellness companies. The program-specific standards fall into five broad categories, creating an evaluation framework for wellness programs that focuses on individual health improvement and risk reduction:

**Assessment:** Includes risk identification and risk awareness program components, such as the use of Health Risk Assessments;

**Interventions:** Addresses overall program design, health coaching, and use of consumer participation incentives, education and communications aspects of wellness programs;

**Evaluation:** Focuses on how the wellness organization calculates, measures, and reports participant progress and overall clinical and financial program success to the client;

**Integration:** Focuses on an organization's ability and willingness to coordinate with other organizations, operations, and programs already in place; and

**Measurement:** Focuses on producing and reporting to purchasers and the public on a specified set of performance measures.

"The Comprehensive Wellness program was developed as part of URAC's commitment to consumer empowerment and protection," said Alan P. Spielman, URAC's president and CEO. "Wellness organizations and employers have recognized the need to support individuals in the improvement and maintenance of their health, and URAC's standards and measures provide a meaningful and actionable framework for wellness program evaluation and performance measurement."

According to the Society for Human Resource Management, about 86 percent of U.S. employers currently offer wellness programs to their employees.<sup>1</sup>

"Over the growth cycle of many years, wellness programs have evolved and matured to become a critical component of employer and health plan benefits," said Douglas Metz, DC, chairman of the URAC Wellness Accreditation Advisory Committee. "High quality and effective wellness programs hold tremendous potential to reduce health risks, lower health care costs, and increase productivity. URAC's Comprehensive Wellness Accreditation standards define an industry-accepted baseline for quality standards. Organizations that pursue accreditation can demonstrate that their processes and quality systems meet or exceed these industry standards. These standards will support the industry as organizations adopt and implement quality management systems and processes."

URAC - Utilization Review Accreditation Commission Founded in 1990, URAC's first accreditation program was designed for health care organizations performing utilization review (the practice of determining whether a health care service is medically necessary). URAC has expanded its accreditation, education and measurement services to cover nearly every functional aspect of health care management and health insurance, and accredits over 400 health care organizations doing business in the United States under at least one of its accreditation programs. Source: [www.urac.org](http://www.urac.org)