

Employer and Business Resources to Increase Cancer Screenings & Policy Development Strategies for Employers to Promote Screenings

Employers have an **important role** to play in **cancer prevention, treatment and survivorship**. Cancer is the second leading cause of death in Pennsylvania, and there are many ways to help reduce the burden of cancer including reasonable time off, on-site screenings and a host of other activities. Read below for links to resources and check back often for updates.

Cancer remains the top condition driving employer benefit costs. It is estimated that by 2030 the financial burden of cancer will surpass \$240 billionⁱ. While it is imperative that employers adopt strategies to address treatment cost, it is equally important that they amplify efforts to increase cancer prevention and early detection via screening approaches to reduce the burden of cancer and increased expense to both employee and employer.

Cancer Screening Benefits

This policy establishes a process for worksites to support all employees who are eligible for breast, cervical, lung and colorectal cancer screening.

- Cancer is the second leading cause of death in Pennsylvania. In 2022, 27,463 Pennsylvanians died of cancer. The age-adjusted death rate was 148.5 per 100,000. Pennsylvania ranks higher than the nation for both cancer incidence and deaths.ⁱⁱ
- The five most diagnosed cancers in Pennsylvania are: Breast, Prostate, Lung and Bronchus, Colon and Rectum, and Urinary Bladder.¹
- Lung cancer is the number one cause of cancer deaths for both men and women in Pennsylvania. The second and third highest causes of cancer death are breast and colorectal cancers for females and prostate and colorectal cancers in males.¹
- Cancers which have screening tests available (breast, prostate, lung, colon, and cervical) accounted for 55% of invasive cancer diagnosis in 2022.²
- The direct medical costs (i.e., total of all health care costs) for cancer in the U.S. are approximately \$208.9 billion, and lost productivity due to cancer diagnosis is around \$135 billion in the country.³
- Cancer treatment accounts for 12% of employers' total medical **costs** in the U.S., with \$125 billion spent on direct medical costs and another \$139 billion associated with diminished productivity and lost work time.⁴ *Early detection and prevention can save lives and reduce the burden and cost of cancer for both employees and employers.*

Cost Effectiveness of Employer Paid Leave

By supporting timely cancer screenings for employees, employers can dramatically reduce productivity loss and indirect costs associated with later stage cancer diagnosis. According to one study, the work loss due to work absence, short-term disability, and long-term disability within the first year after cancer diagnosis amounted to 106 workdays for metastatic (late stage) versus 46 workdays for non-metastatic patients, with a difference of 60 days or nearly a quarter of the total number of working days in 1 year.ⁱⁱⁱ

Paid leave for cancer screenings which are not deducted from other, sick, or vacation PTO may specifically encourage employees to obtain age-appropriate screenings. Early detection of breast, colorectal and cervical cancer dramatically improves treatment outcomes. Moreover, research suggests that employers can provide paid leave with no negative effect on profitability. Employers who offer paid leave may realize a healthier and more productive workforce and spend less on direct medical costs, worker compensation and disability costs, replacement costs for ill or injured workers who are absent, and costs for recruiting and training new workers.⁶

Paid Time off for Screening-Benefits to Employee

Completing recommended cancer screenings can detect breast, cervical, lung, and colorectal cancers early, when treatment is most effective. Regular cervical and colorectal screenings can also identify abnormalities that can be treated or removed before cancer develops. Offering paid time off for screenings removes a major barrier, making it easier for employees to see a doctor before a serious illness occurs. Research shows that paid leave benefits are linked to higher rates of preventive screenings and routine medical visits. While the Affordable Care Act requires most health insurance plans to cover preventive cancer screenings at no out-of-pocket cost, employees without paid time off may still be unable to take full advantage of these services.

How Employers Can Promote Increased Cancer Screenings:

- [Paid Leave Strategies for Cancer Screenings](#)
- [Community Guide: Practice What you Promote - Increasing Cancer Screening Rates Among Employees](#)
- [How Employers Can Promote Cancer Screenings - Johns Hopkins HealthCare Solutions](#)
- [5 Reasons to Get Your Cancer Screening](#)

Model Policy Guidelines:

Offer paid leave for cancer screenings that are not deducted from other sick or vacation time.

- Early detection and screening are the best ways to prevent or find cancer in the earliest stages when treatment often leads to a cure. The first step to creating a worksite that supports cancer screening for all employees is to utilize this model policy in its entirety or adapt this model policy to support employee screening. A Worksite Cancer Screening Policy can include some or all of the following guidelines:
 - [Employer] is committed to providing paid time off annually for employees to complete screenings for cervical cancer [and/or] breast cancer [and/or] colorectal cancer.
 - [Employer] is committed to promoting this policy and providing its employees with evidence-based education to make informed decisions about screening.

- Employer] is committed to implementing evidence-based interventions, such as annual reminders to eligible employees, to increase screening completion.
- Employer] will encourage employees ages 50-75 to be screened for colorectal cancer.
- [Employer] will encourage female employees ages 21-65 to be screened for cervical cancer.
- [Employer] will encourage female employees ages 50-74 to be screened for breast cancer.

Implementation Guidelines & Suggestions for Length of Paid Leave for Screenings:

Paid Leave Requests – when providing paid leave for employees to complete cancer screening, employers may wish to request a written recommendation from the employee’s health care provider that includes the type of cancer screening and test. The timeframe to complete cancer screening varies by test; however, the following can be used as a guideline for paid leave requests.

Tests	Length of Paid Leave
Colonoscopy	1 day
Sigmoidoscopy	1 day
CT Colonography	2 hours
FOBT, FIT, FIT-DNA (at home stool tests)	No time off
Mammogram	1-2 hours
Pap smear	1-2 hours
Low-dose CT scan	1-2 hours

Employer Strategies and Tips:

Engage in Active Communication with Employees

- It is easy to create an environment in which employees are encouraged to get screened for cancer
- Develop a workplace wellness program.
 - Health incentive campaign
- Provide Education Resources to employees.
- Provide evidence-based cancer prevention information to employees.
- Provide patient-friendly screening guidelines and educate employees about cancer screenings; remind employees that regular screening is recommended.
- Provide education to employees on immunization (including HPV), flu shots, blood pressure checks, diabetes checks, dental, etc.
- Encourage employees to talk to their health care provider.
- Design Benefits and Programs to facilitate screening.
- Cover time off to get screened.
- Educate employees on their health plan coverage for screening.
- Hold lunch & learn sessions.
- Promote screening during awareness months: Breast (October), Cervical (January), Colorectal (March), and Lung (November).

Supporting Employees Diagnosed with Cancer

- Provide accommodation that allows employees to continue working.

- Help employees with financial planning to estimate and plan for personal out-of-pocket costs.
 - Provide optional counseling to employees with a cancer diagnosis.
 - Provide access to care coordination and navigation services

Resources:

[Assisting furloughed or underinsured employees get cancer screenings](#)

- [Screening PA-BCCEDP](#)
- [Medical Assistance \(MA\), also known as Medicaid](#)
- [Breast and Cervical Cancer Prevention and Treatment \(BCCPT\) | Department of Human Services | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania](#) provides full health care benefits to individuals needing treatment for breast or cervical cancer, or a pre-cancerous condition of the breast or cervix
- [Pennie](#) is Pennsylvania's official destination for shopping for quality health insurance plans and accessing financial assistance, if eligible.

[Cancer screening and worksite strategies](#)

- [Establishing Workplace Policies | NBCCEDP | CDC](#)
- [NCCN Employer Toolkit](#)
- [CEO Cancer Gold Standard](#)
- [New York State Handout](#)
- [Employer Toolkit - Time to Screen](#)

Information on Types of Cancer:

[Breast and Cervical Cancer \(including HPV\)](#)

- [Pennsylvania Breast Cancer Coalition](#)
- [National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program \(NBCCEDP\) | CDC](#)
- [Breast Cancer | CDC](#)
- [Cervical Cancer | CDC](#)
- [Cervical Cancer | American Cancer Society](#)
- [Breast Cancer | American Cancer Society](#)
- [About Breast Cancer | Komen](#)
- [Cancer Screening & Chronic Disease Programs | Adagio Health](#)
- [Prevention for Professionals | Adagio Health](#)
- [Adagio Health Wellness Project | Adagio Health](#)
- [Early Detection | Access Matters](#)

[Colorectal Cancer](#)

- [How Can Employers Save More Lives from Colorectal Cancer? - American Cancer Society National Colorectal Cancer Roundtable](#)
- [80% In Every Community Interactive Strategic Plan-Breaking Down Policy Barriers](#)
- [80% In Every Community Messaging Guidebook: Recommended Messages to Reaching the Unscreened](#)
- Webinars: [American Cancer Society Employer Strategies for Success](#)

Lung Cancer

- [Lung Cancer Screening Guidelines | American Cancer Society](#)
- [Screening for Lung Cancer | Lung Cancer | CDC](#)
- [UPDATED: Shared Decision-Making in Lung Cancer Screening | American College of Chest Physicians](#)
- [PA Dept of Environmental Protection Radon Webchat January 22nd, 2025, | ABC27](#)
- [Radon in the Home | Department of Environmental Protection | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania](#)
- [Tobacco Recovery - Pennsylvania Statewide Tobacco-Free Recovery Initiative](#)

Prostate Cancer

- [American Cancer Society Recommendations for Prostate Cancer Early Detection | American Cancer Society](#)
- [Early Detection of Prostate Cancer: AUA/SUO Guideline \(2023\) - American Urological Association](#)
- [Recommendation: Prostate Cancer: Screening | United States Preventive Services Taskforce](#)
- [PA Prostate Cancer Coalition](#)
- [Prostate Cancer | Prostate Cancer Information and Overview | American Cancer Society](#)

Model Policy Guidelines

Early detection and screening are the best ways to prevent or find cancer in the earliest stages when treatment often leads to a cure. The first step to creating a worksite that supports cancer screening for all employees is to utilize this model policy in its entirety or adapt this model policy to support employee screening.

1. **[Employer]** is committed to providing paid time off annually for employees to complete screenings for cervical cancer [and/or] breast cancer [and/or] lung cancer [and/or] colorectal cancer.
2. **[Employer]** is committed to promoting this policy and providing its employees with evidence-based education to make informed decisions about screening.
3. **[Employer]** is committed to implementing evidence-based interventions, such as annual reminders to eligible employees, to increase screening completion.
4. **[Employer]** will encourage employees ages 50-75 to be screened for colorectal cancer.
5. **[Employer]** will encourage female employees ages 21-65 to be screened for cervical cancer.
6. **[Employer]** will encourage female employees ages 50-74 to be screened for breast cancer.
7. **[Employer]** will encourage employees ages 55-80 years who have a 30-pack-year smoking history and currently smoke or have quit within the past 15 years to be screened for lung cancer.

Implementation Guidelines & Suggestions for Length of Paid Leave for Screenings

The guidelines below provide suggestions for implementing this policy and increasing preventative cancer screening rates among employees.

Paid Leave Requests

When providing paid leave for employees to complete cancer screening, employers may wish to request a

written recommendation from the employee’s healthcare provider that includes the type of cancer screening and test. The timeframe to complete cancer screening varies by test; however, the following can be used as a guideline for paid leave requests.

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Employee Reminders

The use of reminders to increase cancer screening rates is highly recommended based on strong evidence of effectiveness.⁷ Employers can collaborate with their health plan to send reminders to employees who are due for screening. These reminders should include recommended screening guidelines, coverage of preventive services and contact information for the health plan. Employers and health plans can also track the results of these reminders to determine effectiveness.

Compliance

Use the policy language above as a guide to develop a version that best fits your worksite and supports your employees. The goal is to create a policy that benefits staff while ensuring compliance. Your worksite wellness committee can help keep this policy a priority. Under the Affordable Care Act, all Marketplace health plans, and all non-grandfathered health plans are required to cover certain preventive cancer screening services for men and women without copayments or coinsurance.

Final Statement

By implementing this model policy in its entirety or choosing to tailor this policy to your worksite’s needs, you are taking an important step to increase cancer screening for your employees.

Definition of Terms

- **Sigmoidoscopy:** The doctor uses a short, thin, flexible, lighted tube that is inserted into the rectum. The doctor checks for polyps or cancer inside the rectum and lower third of the colon.
- **Colonoscopy:** This is like flexible sigmoidoscopy, except the doctor uses a longer, thin, flexible, lighted tube to check for polyps or cancer inside the rectum and the entire colon. During the test, the doctor can find and remove most polyps and some cancers. Colonoscopy also is used as a follow-up test if anything unusual is found during one of the other screening tests.
- **High sensitivity Fecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT), Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT) or FIT -DNA Test:** These are home stool tests which can detect tiny amounts of blood in the stool and help determine if additional screening may be required.
- **Mammogram:** A mammogram is an x-ray of the breast.
- **Pap test:** A sample of cells from the cervix are collected during an exam by a healthcare provider to look for cell changes or abnormal cells
- **HPV test: or HPV/Pap co-test:** Detects high risk strains of the HPV virus linked to cervical cancer.

- **Low-Dose Computed Tomography (LDCT):** Scanning combines special x-ray equipment with sophisticated computers to produce multiple, cross-sectional images or pictures of the inside of the body. Low-dose CT uses less ionizing radiation than a conventional CT scan.
- **Pack year:** A pack year is smoking an average of one pack of cigarettes per day for one year. For example, a person could have a 30-pack-year history by smoking one pack a day for 30 years or two packs a day for 15 years.

References

1. [Enterprise Data Dissemination Informatics Exchange \(EDDIE\), accessed on August 31, 2021.](#)
2. [2022 Pennsylvania Cancer Registry Dataset accessed on September 30, 2025.](#)
3. [Fast Facts: Health and Economic Costs of Chronic Conditions | Chronic Disease | CDC](#)
4. [Paying Attention to Cancer Pays Off for Your Employees | Johns Hopkins HealthCare Solutions](#)
5. [Screening Tests | CDC](#)
6. [Public Health Advocacy Institute of Northeastern University School of Law. \(n.d.\). Paid Leave – A Benefit for Employers and Employees.](#)
7. [Cancer Screening: Client Reminders – Cervical Cancer](#)

ⁱ [Fast Facts: Health and Economic Costs of Chronic Conditions | Chronic Disease | CDC](#)

ⁱⁱ [Enterprise Data Dissemination Informatics Exchange \(EDDIE\), accessed on August 31, 2021.](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ [Productivity Loss and Indirect Costs for Patients Newly Diagnosed with Early- versus Late-Stage Cancer](#)