



THE ANNUAL

Employee Health Care Conference – Chicago

Engagement, Cost Control, Outcomes...can you have it all?

Conference:
September 24 – 25, 2026
Marriott Marquis Chicago
Chicago, IL

Pre-conference Events:
September 23

Sponsored by:



PRE-EVENT ACTIVITIES

Wednesday, September 23

4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Early Registration Hospitality Suite & Cocktail Reception

Join us for cocktails and hors d'oeuvres, pick up your conference materials early and network with fellow attendees and vendors.

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DAY ONE

Thursday, September 24

7:30 – 5:00 p.m.

Conference Registration

7:30 – 8:00 a.m.

Continental Breakfast

8:00 – 8:25 a.m.

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Gregg Mauro, Senior Fellow, Human Capital,
The Conference Board

Kelly McDevitt, Program Director, **The Conference Board**

8:25 – 8:55 a.m. **General Session A**

Priority Paralysis in Modern Benefit Strategy: How Employers Are Solving for a Multitude of Emerging Hurdles, While Old Challenges Linger

The struggles of designing an affordable, well utilized and well-liked benefit strategy are not new. Cost mitigation, effective communication and great health outcomes have been a goal for employers for decades, and many still struggle with reaching sustainable positive results in these areas. Layer in modern complexities like AI, workforce reduction, generational demands and differences and modern world challenges, designing for success becomes a very complicated puzzle with multiple priorities competing for your focus. In this session you will hear from industry leaders who have contemplated the current environment and have been successful in implementing solutions new and old to provide the best the industry has to offer for their employees. Hear from and interact with these leaders to understand best practices in today's complex world of benefit solutions, technology and navigation.

Cindy Perry, Senior Managing Director of National Benefits,
PwC

9:10 – 9:50 a.m. **General Session B**

Beyond Traditional: Real-World Success with Non-Conventional Payment and Care Delivery Models

After several years of near double-digit health cost growth, it's time for employers to look beyond traditional levers to deliver better health at a better cost. An engaging panel of forward-thinking employers will share actionable insights into how they are leveraging non-conventional payment models across health care and prescription drugs to enhance transparency, empower employees to access the most cost-effective options, and deliver predictable, high-quality outcomes.

Nathan Counts, Vice President, Total Rewards, **Amtrak**

10:05 – 10:30 a.m.

Refreshment Break

Hosted by:



10:30 – 11:10 a.m. **Concurrent Session C1**

Fertility Benefits: Why Design Matters More Than Coverage

As fertility and family-building benefits expand, many employers are asking a harder question: not whether to offer these benefits, but how to design them in ways that improve outcomes, control costs, and support a diverse workforce. Too often, legacy structures introduce unintended inequities, incentivize unnecessary care, and create cost volatility across the workforce. In this session, hear how a large employer's benefit design choices—particularly decisions around coverage, elective preservation, and family building reimbursement—helped shape employee access, geographical equity, and care decisions.

10:30 – 11:10 a.m. **Concurrent Session C2**

Benefit Leaders Weigh In: Metabolic Health Strategies for Today's GLP-1 World

HR and benefits leaders are feeling the pressure to lower costs, improve outcomes, and support a healthier, more productive workforce—all at once. Metabolic disease sits at the center, driving 5 of the top 6 most costly conditions and accelerating demand for GLP-1s. In this session, peers will share real-world examples of how they're improving member health and costs by rethinking traditional care models—introducing reversal as a benefit, expanding choice beyond medication, and using nutrition to reduce reliance on GLP-1s and pharmacy spend.

Frank Dumont, MD, FACP, Executive Medical Director, **Virta Health**

Jakob Whitted, Global Benefits Manager, **UPS**

10:30 – 11:10 a.m. **Concurrent Session C3**

Keep Calm and Adhere On: Smarter Medication Management for Healthier Hearts

To rein in skyrocketing costs, benefits leaders need to focus on heart health. Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the leading cause of death, and many employers rank cardiovascular conditions among their top cost drivers. Along with lifestyle changes, ensuring appropriate prescribing and improving medication adherence are among the most reliable ways to lower CVD risk. Yet many adults with hypertension are either not prescribed optimal therapy or don't take medications as directed. Digital health can help. This session will share how AI-driven digital heart health can support members in closing medication gaps and drive other healthy habits to improve clinical outcomes.

10:30 – 11:10 a.m. **Concurrent Session C4**

Why Workforce Agility Depends on Mental Health Infrastructure

Organizations are under pressure to adapt quickly—to economic shifts, AI, workforce change, and global disruption. Yet adaptability breaks down when employees are overwhelmed, disengaged, or unsupported. This session connects mental health care to organizational resilience, showing how scalable, adaptive mental health infrastructure enables leaders to sustain performance, navigate change, and reduce risk during periods of volatility. Attendees will leave with practical guidance on how to evaluate and strengthen their mental health infrastructure to support workforce agility and long-term resilience.

11:25 – 12:05 p.m. **Concurrent Session D1**

Beyond Hormones: Unlocking Menopause Care with AI to Drive Outcomes and Reduce Costs

Go beyond traditional menopause solutions that focus exclusively on hormone therapy. Explore strategies that improve employee health, boost performance, and reduce costs, with practical guidance for building menopause programs that help employees thrive and strengthen health outcomes.

11:25 – 12:05 p.m. **Concurrent Session D2**

The Clinical Front Door: Transforming Cardiometabolic Outcomes

Traditional lifestyle programs are falling short as obesity and chronic disease costs climb. Attend and discover how a clinical-first obesity strategy serves as the "front door" to treating high-cost cardiometabolic conditions including obesity and type 2 diabetes. Hear directly from benefits leaders on how they're approaching moving beyond lifestyle-only support to a comprehensive medical solution to reduce point solution fatigue, better manage GLP-1 utilization and Rx spend, and deliver a total return on care through measurable health outcomes and long-term cost savings.

11:25 – 12:05 p.m. **Concurrent Session D3**

Neurodiversity in the Workplace: Unmet Needs, Untapped Potential

Over a billion people worldwide live with ADHD, autism, dyslexia, and other neurodivergent conditions, yet most workplaces offer only basic accommodations. The Workforce Mental Health Trends Report finds that 91% of benefits leaders are concerned about supporting neurodiverse needs, yet 83% aren't sure where to start. Without the right support, neurodivergent employees often face burnout, anxiety, and disengagement, while their unique strengths go untapped. This session will explore how leading organizations are moving beyond compliance to create workplaces where neurodivergent employees can truly thrive. From equipping managers to recognize and support diverse thinking styles to providing employees with skills coaching and timely, evidence-based care – you'll gain practical strategies to strengthen support for neurodiversity in the workplace and increase engagement, retention, and innovation.

11:25 – 12:05 p.m. **Concurrent Session D4**

Reducing Frontline Safety Risk Through Mental Health Support

Frontline work involves inherent physical and psychological safety risks—accidents, injuries, long or irregular hours, and exposure to violence. Over time, the cumulative effect of these working conditions makes the environment ripe for mental fatigue, anxiety, stress, and substance use risk, which can further increase safety exposure. For employers, this makes mental health support a non-negotiable part of any effective safety strategy. In this session, learn how a large company has built a support system that identifies risk early, provides the right care at the right time, and helps employees return to work safely. The session also explores how timely follow-up after incidents supports recovery and reduces future risk.

12:05p.m. – 1:05 p.m.

Luncheon

1:05 p.m. – 1:45 p.m. **General Session E**

Future-Proofing Benefits: Why the New Majority Requires a New Model of Care

It's expected that Millennials and Gen Z combined will make up more than 58% of the total workforce by 2030. As with all generational shifts, expectations change. What does this mean for health care? Join this candid conversation with Mercedes-Benz to gain insights into how health care must change to support this new generation of digital-first consumers and learn how much they want to be a part of their care journey.

2:15 p.m. – 2:55 p.m. **Concurrent F1**

Designing Cancer Care for a Distributed Workforce: How Genuine McCarthy and Panera Built Scalable, Tiered Cancer Strategies

Cancer is a leading cost driver — and for employers with mixed workforces spanning field workers, hourly staff, and corporate employees, effective cancer care requires more than a one-size-fits-all solution. This session explores how two employers built workforce-aligned cancer strategies that meet employees where they are. Genuine McCarthy, one of the nation's oldest construction firms, engaged a distributed workforce — including craft workers with limited computer access — through onsite activation, targeted outreach, and an always-on, oncologist-led care team. Within 70 days: >7% enrollment, 54% increase in screening adherence, and 24% of participants identified as high risk. Panera, with 8,000 eligible employees across corporate offices, distribution centers, and 2,000+ café locations, designed a tiered approach: cancer screenings for part-time staff and a full program — detection through survivorship — for full-time employees. Attend this fireside chat to learn how you can close screening gaps, engage hard-to-reach populations, and scale cancer benefits that drive lasting savings — regardless of workforce complexity.

Misi Holmberg, CEBS, CPSP, Director, Benefits, Panera

Stephanie Mester, Benefits Technology & Compliance Supervisor, Genuine McCarthy Enterprises

Josh Sturm, Chief Revenue Officer, Color

2:15 p.m. – 2:55 p.m. **Concurrent F2**

Beyond the Leave: Rewrite the Mental Health LOA Playbook

A recent study found that 74% of respondents reported an increase in employee requests for leaves of absence or accommodations for mental health-related issues over the last year. But what if we flipped the script and reduced the number of mental health-related leaves? In this session, leaders will challenge the traditional leave model and share how they're reframing their approach, shifting from reactive leave administration to proactive, clinically informed support. We'll explore how to reduce avoidable leaves, deliver meaningful care while employees are out, and design sustainable returns that prevent relapse and repeat cycles. Along the way, we'll unpack what the "leave surge" is really telling us about burnout, access barriers, and workplace culture, and how employers can intervene earlier with the right pathways and guardrails.

2:15 p.m. – 2:55 p.m. **Concurrent F3**

The Shift to Flexibility: Reimagining Employee Benefits for Impact, Value, and Efficiency

Today's workforce expects personalized benefits but delivering that impact can feel overwhelming with fixed budgets and fragmented systems. This session will show how flexible strategies, like Lifestyle Spending Accounts (LSAs), can significantly elevate the perceived value of your benefits offering and drive results without massive overhauls. We will explore how to audit and optimize your current programs, identify underperforming investments, and design benefits that align with company goals. You'll leave with practical tools, peer insights, and a clear roadmap for a more strategic, efficient, and engaging benefits strategy.

2:15 p.m. – 2:55 p.m. **Concurrent F4**

How Koch Lowered Health Care Costs by Empowering Members with a Shoppable Health Plan

In 2025, Koch Industries piloted a health plan in Georgia that flipped the traditional model of how health care is paid for and accessed. The plan paid the average cost of care—no networks, no copays, no prior authorizations. Members who chose lower-cost care kept half the savings; those who spent more paid the difference. Families saved about \$4,000 per year between lower premiums and money earned by shopping, with an average of \$500 cash back for those choosing lower-cost care. After a successful first-year pilot, Koch is expanding the offering to cover another 15,000 eligible employees across Texas and Kansas. Attend this session and explore their approach.

2:55 – 3:25 p.m.

Refreshment Break

Hosted by:



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3:25 p.m. – 4:05 p.m. **Concurrent G1**

The New Specialty COE: High-Touch, Low-Friction Care for Complex Conditions

Specialty conditions like Crohn's, MS, and rheumatoid arthritis impact less than 2% of employees but can drive over 20% of total plan costs—largely due to delayed starts, fragmented care, and unnecessary hospital-based treatment. This session will explore how forward-looking employers are redefining Centers of Excellence (COE) not as destinations, but as delivery models to improve patient experience, accelerate time to treatment, and reduce costs—all while delivering claims-validated savings with zero upfront costs. No PEPM. No implementation fees. Just proven ROI—clinically rigorous and financially risk-free.

3:25 p.m. – 4:05 p.m. **Concurrent G3**

The Role of Financial Care for Employee Health, Wellbeing, and a Thriving Workforce

Employers have long understood the value of a mentally and physically healthy workforce. Now they realize that – as the biggest driver of stress and the biggest barrier to getting the right care early – financial health is foundational to mental and physical health. Most doctor visits are stress-related, and financial worries significantly hurt productivity. Yet financial wellness has often been limited to CFP-driven planning or point solutions that add a veneer of support. Employers like Amazon are adopting solutions relevant to the 70% of Americans who are not financially healthy. This session will explore the next generation of financial health benefits that meaningfully improve wellbeing, retention, safety, and productivity for working families.

3:25 p.m. – 4:05 p.m. **Concurrent G4**

The Science of Personalizing Population Health

Traditional population health models rely on averages. But employees aren't averages—they're individuals with unique biology. This session will explore how employers can bridge the gap between population-level strategy and individual action using lab testing for 100+ biomarkers. You'll learn how biological insights drive employee health ownership, uncover early indicators of thousands of conditions, and support outcomes like retention, energy, and reduced cost of care. You'll learn how employers are seeing early ROI through more engaged teams and smarter intervention—not more intervention.

4:20 – 5:00 p.m. **General Session H**

Turning Scale Into Savings: How Bank of America Gets Ahead of High-Cost Claimants

As health care costs rise, relying on lagging claims data is a structural disadvantage—most employers identify risk only after costs have already accrued. In this session, Bank of America will share how they've shifted from reactive cost control to proactive cost and health management. Learn how they combine early risk identification with personalized, at-scale engagement to reach members before costs escalate. The session will highlight real-world applications across key cost drivers, including ED avoidance, MSK (low back pain), care navigation, and site-of-care optimization—and why disciplined execution is as critical as strategy.

5:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Cocktail Reception

DAY TWO

Friday, September 25

8:00 – 8:30 a.m.

Continental Breakfast

8:30 – 9:10 a.m. **General Session I**

Total Rewards Reimagined: Engagement, Cost Control, and Outcomes in a New Era of Work

Organizations face a persistent tension: how do you drive employee engagement and measurable health outcomes while keeping benefits costs in check? This session cuts through the trade-offs, presenting proven strategies and real-world data showing that with smart plan design, targeted incentives, and population health analytics, you truly can have it all.

9:25 – 10:05 a.m. **Concurrent J1**

How 3M Leverages Value-Based Specialty Care to Defy Cost Trends

In this session, learn how 3M has spent the past six years re-engineering its approach to specialty care through value-based care. Explore the innovative strategies used to optimize utilization for 46,000 members, and how this evolving partnership has moved beyond cost containment to deliver high-impact solutions in surgery, cancer care, and substance use treatment—demonstrating that it's possible to bend the cost curve while improving health outcomes.

9:25 – 10:05 a.m. **Concurrent J2**

Replacing Group Health Insurance with ICHRA: The Path to Cost Predictability

Learn how a large company, after facing double-digit renewals and limited employee choice, transitioned from traditional group coverage to an ICHRA model. You'll hear their journey from evaluation to company-wide rollout, including budget impact, employee adoption, and unexpected challenges. You'll learn how this model changed their role from "choosing the plan" to "supporting employee choice" and what that shift required from HR.

9:25 – 10:05 a.m. **Concurrent J3**

Financial Health and Your Company's Bottom Line

For global workforces, financial stress is driving costly impact across employee health, productivity, and retention. With 88% of employees reporting financial stress, many organizations are now seeing delayed care and deferred treatment contribute to higher overall health care spend. Hear how leading organizations are:

- Building the business case for financial wellbeing
- Integrating solutions into existing benefits ecosystems
- Designing global programs that drive real engagement across every level of the workforce

9:25 – 10:05 a.m. **Concurrent J4**

Checking Every Box: How the Atlanta Police Department is Redefining Mental Health Support

Like many first responders, the ~1,800 sworn officers of the Atlanta Police Department are exposed to traumatic events on a regular basis. At the same time, stigma, lack of trust, and access challenges often prevent officers from seeking the mental health support they need. Attend this session and learn how the department is breaking down barriers to care and transforming their approach to mental health support in the workplace and beyond.

10:15a.m. – 10:55 a.m. **Concurrent K1**

Reactivating Preventive Care: An Employer Case Study in Access, Engagement, and Early Risk Identification

Despite widespread coverage, preventive care utilization remains low across employer populations. This session presents a case study from The Partners Group on how rethinking access—not incentives—can materially change employee behavior. Learn how an at-home preventive screening model increased participation, surfaced previously unidentified health risks, and enabled timely clinical follow-up without disrupting existing provider relationships. The discussion will focus on measurable outcomes, implementation considerations, and evidence-based lessons you can apply to improve engagement and long-term health outcomes across your workforce.

10:15a.m. – 10:55 a.m. **Concurrent K2**

Stop Losing Employees at Open Enrollment — AI Is Changing the Game

Open enrollment is often the first and most important touchpoint in an employee's health care journey, where complex decisions set the tone for the year ahead. AI helps simplify this moment by using data like plan details, expected needs, and individual preferences to guide employees toward more informed choices with clear cost insights and relevant recommendations. But the value does not end once enrollment closes. The same AI-driven approach continues to support employees throughout the year, helping them understand coverage, find in-network care, access clear and upfront pricing, and navigate questions as they arise. This creates a more consistent and intuitive experience that reduces confusion, improves benefit utilization, and helps employees make better decisions at every stage of their health care journey.

10:15a.m. – 10:55 a.m. **Concurrent K4**

PBM Transition Playbook: Leading a Benefits Transformation

Successful pharmacy benefits transitions are about partnership as much as they are processes. Drawing on a large employer's real-world experience, this session explores how deep strategic alignment with a modern PBM partner drives a smooth rollout where transactional relationships often fail. Learn how to minimize member disruption and protect the overall experience by choosing a partner who prioritizes your

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benefits programs success. We will dive into the transparency, performance metrics, and SLAs that define a collaborative relationship in the critical months before and after go-live. Walk away with a clear roadmap to lead a transition that transforms your PBM into a strategic ally, delivering both financial results and high-quality member care.

10:55 – 11:20 a.m.

Refreshment Break

Hosted by:



11:20 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. **Concurrent L1**

MSK Is Not an Economic Problem – It's a Clinical Resolution Problem

Musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions remain the #1 driver of employer health care spend, yet costs continue to rise despite an explosion of digital MSK platforms, point programs, and utilization controls. Why? Because MSK has been treated as an economic problem to manage rather than a clinical problem to solve. This session focuses on how a large employer used a fundamentally different model – a hybrid MSK care model designed to deliver clinical resolution across the full episode of care. You'll learn how they shifted from managing utilization to delivering clinical resolution and how a clinically led, hybrid care ecosystem can reduce variation, improve outcomes, and create predictable cost performance.

Matt Brady, Executive Director, Benefits, **USAA**

12:10 – 12:20 p.m. **General Session M**

Conference Wrap-Up & Prizes

Recapping key conference topics and themes, this wrap-up session will bring major conference takeaways to life, providing you with a summary of all key-takeaways and prizes.

INNOVATION SHOWCASE PRESENTATIONS

During the first day of the conference, you'll hear from 6 innovative start-ups who will have 3 minutes to pitch their solution. You also have the chance to meet with them during the conference in the exhibit hall.

WHOM YOU WILL MEET

Corporate executives from:

- Benefits
- Human Resources
- Organizational Development
- Talent Management
- Total Rewards
- Wellness

CONTINUING EDUCATION UNITS



Attendees will receive continuing education credits. The 2025 conference was approved for:

- 7.75 (General/HR) recertification credit hours toward aPHR, PHR, SPHR, PHRca, GPHR, PHRi, and SPHRi recertification through the HR Certification Institute (HRCI)
- 7.75 PDCs for SHRM-CP or SHRM-SCP

We anticipate the 2026 conference to be approved for approximately the same number of credits. Specific details will be available about a month before the event.

POLICY ON NON-EMPLOYER ATTENDEES

Registration is open only to employers. An employer is a corporate executive in an HR or Benefits role employed by a company that doesn't sell wellness or health-related products or services. Unless a conference sponsor, The Conference Board reserves the right to cancel registrations received from vendors, including Plans, Brokers, Insurance Companies, Health and Benefits Consultants, Wellness Service Providers, Associations, Think Tanks, etc., or anyone in a sales or accounts management role (from any organization). No exceptions will be made. Airline, hotel and any fees incurred will not be reimbursed. All registrants must use an email address supplied by their employer. If you would like details on becoming a sponsor or want to check with us before you sign up, contact us at: ttodorova@tcb.org.

HOTEL INFORMATION

Marriott Marquis Chicago

2121 South Prairie Avenue,
Chicago, IL 60616

Reserve your room [here](#).

Cut-off date: Monday, August 31, 2026

Rate: \$379

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