NEW RELEASE
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New research provides national snapshot of county health benefits coverage
Countsies offer extensive employee health coverage, balance expanding eligibility and rising costs

WASHINGTON, D.C. – America’s counties spend an estimated $20-24 billion on health insurance premiums each year, according to a new study by the National Association of Counties (NACo), covering an estimated 2.5 million county employees and nearly 2.4 million dependents.

The report – County Health Benefits 2014 – is based on a survey of nearly 1,000 counties conducted in March 2014 compared with a survey of the same counties in April 2009. Released today, the research examines changes in health benefits coverage, cost-containment strategies, trends in wellness programs, coverage for retirees and implementation of the Affordable Care Act.

“This research provides insights and data on county employee health benefits coverage, changes over time and ongoing challenges,” said Dr. Emilia Istrate, NACo’s director of research and one of the paper’s lead authors. “Counties are working to contain costs while maintaining competitive health benefits for employees. County governments not only provide many vital services to their residents, but they are also significant employers in their communities.”

An analysis of survey results reveals:

• County health benefit eligibility for employees and dependents and county spending on health insurance increased significantly over the last five years.
  o Between 2009 and 2014, average monthly premiums for county health plans increased by 20 percent.
  o Counties offering coverage to all of their part-time employees doubled (from eight to 16 percent).

• Counties are working with their employees to contain health care costs, by continuing to share premium costs or increasing the deductible amounts, copayments or out-of-pockets limits.

• Counties are still grappling with the uncertain effects of the Affordable Care Act (ACA).
  o While 34 percent of counties mentioned increased costs associated with ACA implementation, 35 percent reported no ACA impact.
  o The complexity of the ACA statute was the most commonly cited barrier to implementing federal health care reform.
- Most counties offer some type of wellness program, at a higher rate than in 2009.
  - The number of counties offering wellness programs jumped from 59 percent in 2009 to more than 80 percent this year.
- Counties are far more likely than other employers to offer retiree health benefits.

*County Health Benefits 2014* is a collaborative effort between NACo and the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia.

For more detailed results in the executive summary and full report, visit: [http://www.naco.org/healthbenefits](http://www.naco.org/healthbenefits).

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The **National Association of Counties** (NACo) is the only national organization that represents county governments in the United States. Founded in 1935, NACo assists America’s 3,069 counties in pursuing excellence in public service to produce healthy, vibrant, safe and resilient counties. NACo promotes sound public policies, fosters county solutions and innovation, promotes intergovernmental and public-private collaboration and provides value-added services to save counties and taxpayers money. More information at: [www.naco.org](http://www.naco.org).