



TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health  
FROM: Christopher Mackie, Medical Officer of Health / CEO  
DATE: 2018 November 1

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## MIDDLESEX-LONDON HEALTH UNIT BE WELL PROGRAM UPDATE

### **Recommendation**

*It is recommended that Report No. 043-18FFC re: “Middlesex-London Health Unit (MLHU) Be Well Program Update” be received for information.*

### **Key Points**

- The Be Well Program, launched in 2016 with a five-year commitment through Program Budgeting and Marginal Analysis (PBMA), provides tools and opportunities for employees to benefit from activities that promote the well-being of all staff at MLHU.
- The Be Well initiative promotes strategies for meeting the Psychological Standard and is a key activity in the Employee Engagement and Learning component of the five-year MLHU Strategic Plan, 2015–20.
- MLHU’s actual benefit cost in 2017 was 4.09% lower than the headcount-adjusted projection of total benefit costs with wellness intervention.
- MLHU has had a two-year savings of \$278,153 in benefit costs.

### **Background**

In order to accomplish MLHU’s mission of promoting and protecting the health of the community, it is essential to promote and protect the health of the employees. With Board of Health approved funding in 2016, MLHU launched the Be Well initiative mid-year for all its employees. A Be Well internal committee, with representatives from different roles and from all divisions, was formed in April 2016 to promote the development of a culture of health and well-being among MLHU employees.

### **Be Well Initiatives**

The Be Well Committee works together with other Health Unit committees (the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee and the United Way Committee) and supersedes previous committees (the Workplace Wellness and Fun Committee and the Employee and Family Assistance Committee), using the 4 Pillars of Wellness<sup>1</sup> as guideposts for delivering programs and events in a comprehensive approach to employee well-being. The events, resources, training, and programs provided to staff in 2016–17 are outlined in [Appendix A](#). For 2018, the Be Well Committee launched a survey of all MLHU employees to evaluate the various elements of the Wellness program, including: responses to current well-being initiatives, barriers to participation, and interest in new and upcoming programs. There was a 40% response rate, with 51% of respondents indicating that the Be Well program is having a direct positive impact on their health. Employees also provided feedback on current initiatives and suggestions for future initiatives.

### **Return on Investment**

For 2016, the headcount-adjusted projected cost of benefits was \$1,377,000. After including the cost of the wellness program and the impact of anticipated health costs, the projected costs decreased to \$1,309,000. The actual costs incurred by MLHU for the period of 2016 were \$1,257,855. The difference between the

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<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization (WHO) 4 Pillars of Wellness: Physical Work Environment, Workplace Culture and Wellness, Personal Health Resources, and Enterprise Community Involvement.

actual costs and the revised projection was \$119,145. This difference in costs translates to a saving of 8.65% in total benefit costs (see Figure 1). The Be Well program was launched mid-2016, so after a full year of programming in 2017, the costs continued to decrease from the projected costs. For 2017, the headcount-adjusted projection was \$1,488,000. After including the cost of the wellness program and the impact of anticipated health costs, the projected costs were \$1,344,000. The actual costs incurred by MLHU for this period were \$1,288,992. The difference between actual costs and the revised projection was \$159,008. This difference in costs represents a decrease of 10.98% in benefit costs (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1:**

	2016	2017
Headcount-Adjusted Expected Total Benefit Cost	\$1,377,000.	\$1,448,000.
Headcount-Adjusted Expected Total Benefit Cost WITH Wellness	\$1,309,000.	\$1,344,000.
MLHU's Actual Experience	\$1,257,855	\$1,288,992
Difference Between MLHU's Actual Experience and Expected Total Benefit Cost	\$119,145.	\$159,008
	8.65% savings	10.98% savings

The original projection provided by Aon Hewitt claimed that, "an investment of \$208,000 over 5 years is anticipated to return \$384,000 in savings"; this equates to an average savings of \$76,800 per year. The difference between MLHU's actual experience and the projected total benefit cost represents a two-year savings of \$278,153, with an investment of \$94,000. In order to meet the original savings targets, an additional \$105,847 in savings (an average of \$35,282 per year) will need to be achieved over the next three years. As modifiable health risks are mitigated and managed, MLHU may see less aggressive savings variances in 2018, 2019, and 2020; however, Aon Hewitt still predicts that MLHU will meet the savings projections originally set out in 2015.

## Programming and Next Steps

According to the data on drugs, extended health care, short-term disability, long-term disability, and employee assistance plans for organizations of similar size and industry, the top-four most common modifiable conditions, by therapeutic category, are: musculoskeletal, mental health, cardiovascular, and diabetes. The Be Well programming was designed to raise employees' awareness of these conditions through health risk assessments and biometric screening clinics. Supports to assist with these modifiable conditions were also provided through: the Sprout Engagement tool for tracking wellness goals and physical activity challenges; mental health training for managers; implementation of a more robust EFAP program; implementation of a new ergonomics program; and increased social activities for employees.

In coming years, the Be Well Program will inaugurate a new, comprehensive partnership that will allow us to focus even more closely on MLHU's top-four modifiable factors. The Health Unit requested quotes from potential wellness partners and has selected an organization to partner with that will not only target employee wellness solutions, but will also provide one program to assist with medical practitioner navigation and another that may potentially deliver pharmacy savings. This new partnership was endorsed at the Be Well Committee level, and MLHU is excited to roll it out to employees in the next month.

This report was prepared by the Healthy Organization Division



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