

Workshop aims to help employers lower their health insurance costs

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By Chris Marr, Rome News-Tribune Staff Writer

Area employers can get guidance next month on improving the health of their workers and lowering their annual health insurance costs through the Healthy Solutions Workshop.

The program, Feb. 24 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at The Forum, is one of many workshops of its kind being held around the state. The workshop is free of charge.

"Because of rising incidence of heart disease and diabetes, health costs for employees have risen," said Diane Smith, event organizer and the chronic disease prevention coordinator for Northwest Georgia Public Health.

"The key thing here is to try to intervene," she said. "It will mean a healthier work force and better retention."

Featured speakers will be Peter A. Townsley, director of the Center for Preventive Medicine in Atlanta; Dr.

Charles H. Taylor, who was recently recognized in The Consumers' Guide to Top Doctors; and William R.

"Robbie" Burlas, an insurance broker who specializes in employee benefits negotiating.

The program is aimed at administrators and human resources personnel at companies in Chattooga, Gordon, Floyd and Polk counties.

Worksites and employers interested in attending the workshop are urged to register by Jan. 31 to allow time for them to complete a Worksite Wellness Assessment Tool. The evaluation can be sent to the state, and employers will be able to meet one-on-one with consultants at the Feb. 24 workshop to discuss ways to improve worksite health support.

The workshop in Rome is organized by Northwest Georgia Public Health and also sponsored by the occupational health programs of Floyd Medical Center and Redmond Regional Medical Center. Statewide, the workshops are organized by the state's Cardiovascular Health Initiative.

Anyone interested in attending can call Diane Smith of the public health office for a registration packet at 802-5251.