



COOK  
COUNTY  
BENEFITS CONNECT

# EMPLOYEE BENEFITS QUARTERLY

Winter 2017

## Changes before the New Year

Say hello to **ConnectYourCare for FSA/Commuter Programs**. As of January 1, ConnectYourCare is now the administrator of your healthcare and dependent care Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA), as well as the Commuter Benefits Plan. You can expect shorter waits and there are no longer administrative fees for employees who use the Commuter Plan. Place your order at [connectyourcare.com/cookcounty](http://connectyourcare.com/cookcounty), and submit orders by the 10th each month for the following month.



As of December 1, **Davis Vision** replaced EyeMed as the vision carrier for County employees. Through Davis, you get the same coverage at no cost and you have access to more than 68,000 providers. The switch comes with an increase in the allowance for frames at Visionworks to \$150, but remains \$100 at other locations. See [davisvision.com/member](http://davisvision.com/member) for Visionworks locations near you. Davis Vision gives you access to an exclusive collection of frames and a free breakage warranty, but some limitations apply.

As a reminder, you must use eligible Dependent Care services by December 31, 2017 and submit expenses to WageWorks by March 31, 2018.



# New for 2018

## Remember the Ides of March

There is an exciting change for the Dependent Care FSA for next year. You now have a dependent care grace period — similar to the healthcare FSA — and will have until March 15, 2019, to use the funds from the 2018 plan year.

## Working toward wellness

Because we care about you, we have formed a Wellness Advisory Group made up of County employees from different departments. They will meet once a quarter to talk about wellness initiatives and are interested in your comments and suggestions on how to encourage wellness throughout County offices. The members of the group are: Gail Baker (Forest Preserves of Cook County), LaKeisha Freeman (CCHHS), William Kern (Juvenile Temporary Detention Center), Rebecca Reiersen (Sheriff) and Karen Williams (CCHHS).

Toward that end, we've developed a new schedule for wellness education called Wellness Wednesdays. Be on the lookout for emails with healthful tips and lifestyle changes you can use to be at your best and set a good example for others.

## 2018 Wellness Themes

<b>January</b>	Healthy Living Swaps
<b>February</b>	Healthy Heart: Improving Blood Circulation
<b>March</b>	Mental & Cognitive Health
<b>April</b>	Cancer Awareness
<b>May</b>	Health Fairs
<b>June</b>	Lung Health
<b>July</b>	The Importance of Nutrition
<b>August</b>	Mindfulness
<b>September</b>	Your Health Care Benefits
<b>October</b>	Injury Prevention
<b>November</b>	Diabetes
<b>December</b>	Healthy Eating for the Holidays

## Livongo: A new free health benefit that helps you manage your diabetes

**Who can join:** You and any family members with diabetes can join at no cost if you have medical coverage through the Cook County medical plans.

What you get:

- **Connected Meter:** Automatically uploads your blood glucose readings to a secure online account and provides real-time personalized tips.
- **Support from Coaches** When You Need It: Communicate with a coach anytime if you have questions about nutrition or lifestyle changes.
- **Unlimited Strips at No Cost:** When you are about to run out, we ship more supplies right to your door.

Enroll at [welcome.livongo.com/CookCounty](http://welcome.livongo.com/CookCounty).



## Open Enrollment — A Look Back

Fast facts about the recently completed Open Enrollment period:

Employees made more than  
**9,500**  
changes online October 2-31

**13**  
Open Enrollment events were  
held throughout the County

**Vendors that participated: BlueCross BlueShield of Illinois, CVS/caremark, Guardian, Davis Vision, ConnectYourCare, Legal Shield, Securian, and flu-shot provider Cook County Health and Hospitals System-Employee Health Services.**

## Are you a member of the MyHealth Connections Facebook community?



If not, now is the time to join. You'll receive additional tips and insights that will help you stay on track. Join at [MyHealth Connections](https://www.facebook.com/MyHealthConnections) on Facebook.



It's Here!

## The 10-Day Healthy Holiday Challenge

There's nothing wrong with treating yourself during the holidays. This year, give yourself the gift of good, better or even your best health ever by participating in Cook County Risk Management's 10-Day Healthy Holidays Challenge.

Starting in mid-December, we will be emailing tips on how to stay active and eat foods that are better for you during one of the least healthful times of the year. Try something new, resist holiday temptations (they're everywhere) and replace them with other healthier options. Wouldn't it be better to stay on track to meet your fitness goals and start the New Year without regrets? We think so!

You CAN keep up your exercise routine during the holidays. We'll introduce new exercises and explore ways to work out, even if you're traveling.

We'll also help you stay mindful of your decisions about what to eat and what not to eat. Even small changes can help keep your waistline in check, such as substituting healthier, low-calorie ingredients in your holiday recipes without compromising on great taste!

**We want to hear from you.**

Have you read a past wellness communication that changed your lifestyle? Whether it was "[Changing Your Salty Ways](#)" or "[Walk Your Way to Fitness](#)," or one of our other myriad tips, let us know by sharing your story. Email us at [risk.mgmt@cookcountyrisk.com](mailto:risk.mgmt@cookcountyrisk.com), and it might appear in a future newsletter.

## Employee Focus: Aren Kriks

Aren Kriks has loved the outdoors since growing up in Willowbrook and riding his BMX bike on trails of the Forest Preserves of Cook County. Now as a civil engineer for the Forest Preserves, he gets to work outside, hiking during lunch and filling his lungs with fresh air.

Aren wants everyone to enjoy the outdoors and good health. That's one of the reasons he helps the American Lung Association promote its annual Fight for Air Climb up the stairs of Presidential Towers, on Chicago's Near West Side.

We caught up with Aren to find out about the next event, March 11, 2018 (\$15 early-bird registration ends January 12, saving you \$10 off the regular registration price. See details below.):

**Q: How do you help the American Lung Association?**

A: I participate in a lot of American Lung Association events, but the Presidential Towers stair climb is the one I'm most involved with. I'm a team captain, I do fundraising, and I am on a volunteer committee. We meet 10 times a year to promote the climb and promote the Lung Association and their events.

**Q: Why did you get started with them?**

A: Unfortunately, my father had lung cancer seven years ago, and he had been sick for about a year. Right around the time things were not so good, I was looking for an outlet and a cause for which I could raise money, and I found this event. My brother Dane and I signed up for the stair climb in 2012. We went around asking for pledges and wound up being surprised by 20 or so of our friends who started a team and climbed in our honor. We raised \$5,000; it was an amazing day.

Shortly after that, my father passed away. The American Lung Association contacted me, and I felt a connection, like family. For years I would speak at events and tell my story and the story of how the Lung Association

continued 



has been great throughout all that. When they started this volunteer committee a year later, they asked me to join and I did gladly. I've spoken in front of their board and made speeches at their bike ride events.

**Q: But the stair climb is your main event. Sounds daunting.**

A: Presidential Towers has four residential buildings, each with 45 floors or 585 steps. You can choose to climb one building, two, three or all four. Do all four and you'll cover 180 floors, 2,340 steps. When you combine all four floors, that's taller than Willis Tower. But you get short breaks between climbing each building; you might wait

five minutes to go down the elevator and walk over to the next building. There's no rush — you can pause as long as you need. But it's good to keep that momentum going.

**Q: Whoa, 2,340 steps is a lot! How long does that take?**

A: The fastest time is 15 minutes. It takes me 25 minutes, it takes some folks 45 to 50 minutes or more. The great thing about this event is you'll see all kinds of people in different stages of health. You'll see 8-year-olds

— who don't understand what it means to be tired — fly up the stairs. You'll see people in their 60s and 70s who are awesome, climbing slow and steady. We also have firefighters climbing in their full suits: 70 or 80 pounds worth of gear. People love to see that.

**Q: How do you train for something like that?**

A: I work for the Forest Preserves, and one of the places where we'll often promote the event or find people training is at the Swallow Cliff Woods stairs in Palos Park. It's great to be able to connect my work



with my love of our forest preserves and the people who enjoy them, and it's an opportunity to promote healthy living and raise money for a worthy cause.

This is the only event I really do. But at the end of the climb, the Lung Association doesn't just give you a medal and send you on your way. They follow up and you feel like part of a family, not like after a typical 5K race. There's a sense of community, and it has brought my friends and family closer to my cause.



Have questions?

Visit [cookcountyrisk.com](http://cookcountyrisk.com) or contact Employee Benefits:

Email: [risk.mgmt@cookcountyil.gov](mailto:risk.mgmt@cookcountyil.gov)

Blue Cross Blue Shield Hotline Numbers:

For HMO plan: 1 (800) 892-2803

For PPO plan: 1 (800) 960-8809



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