



RESOURCES CASE STUDIES

POLK COUNTY, FLORIDA PUTS VALUE-BASED HEALTH ON THE MAP

In the heart of Central Florida lies Polk County, a vibrant community leading the next revolution in health care by designing health benefits that lower costs and boost productivity and performance. Michael Kushner, Risk Management Director for Polk County, is leading that charge. Mike and his colleagues have found a way to get greater value out of the County's health care investment by removing the barriers to care for employees with chronic diseases and conditions.

With a keen eye for assessing and quantifying risk, Mike had concerns about the high cost of workers' compensation claims. Rather than dealing with the consequences of high claim costs and absenteeism among employees, Mike and his colleagues set out to mitigate risks before they became problems.

By initially utilizing risk data, the County management found a high incidence of diabetic and hypertensive patients in their workforce, leading them to craft a new value-based approach for those who were already diagnosed or most at risk for developing the conditions.

Preventive and routine care, counseling for nutrition and weight management, and smoking cessation programs are provided by health care professionals at the county-owned Wellness Center, a medical home for county employees. The Wellness Center doesn't take the place of employees' health care providers. It helps employees get the most out of their benefits through services that are tailored to their needs and the County's requirements, such as pre-employment physicals and mandatory Department of Transportation testing.

The County's health team develops individualized care plans. Copays for diabetic and/or hypertension medication and supplies are eliminated if employees participate in a disease management program.

While the approach has been strictly driven by risk mitigation to stem the tide of escalating costs, Mike and the County management team are truly striving to make a difference in the health and quality of life of their chronically ill employees because, as Mike says, "it's the right thing to do."

THE PLAN:

1. Assess patients and categorize by severity of disease state.
2. Develop individualized care plans.
3. Assess patients' overall knowledge of their disease state.
4. Routine consultations to educate, promote behavior change and set health care goals.
5. Patients retain \$0 copays if actively participating in the program.



WHO IS POLK COUNTY, FLORIDA?

- Economy largely based on agritech, phosphate mining and tourism
- Largest citrus producer in the State of Florida
- Center for many of the nation's largest distribution companies
- 581,058 residents as of 2007
- \$1.7 billion county budget for 2009
- 8,000 employees and dependent lives covered by the County's self-insured plan

THE COUNTY MANAGEMENT IS STRIVING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE OF ITS EMPLOYEES.



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RESULTS AND OUTCOMES

Due to increased medication adherence in conjunction with routine care and behavioral changes, employees with hypertension have a decreased risk of stroke and heart attack while the diabetic population has experienced a decreased risk of kidney diseases, amputations and blindness.

- Since 2004, emergency room visits have declined 7% among diabetic participants and 11% for those with hypertension.
- Hospitalizations have dropped even more dramatically—22% for diabetics and 18% for those with hypertension.
- The County's high risk diabetic patient population dropped 22% from 2004 to 2008, yielding considerable savings per employee each year.
- After the initial program investment and cost of waiving diabetic and hypertension medication copays, the Polk County government has seen net savings of \$213,000. This amount reflects only savings from reduced hospitalizations and ER visits—and doesn't account for net gains from increased worker productivity and reduced absenteeism.

QUICK GLANCE: THE WELLNESS CENTER'S ADDED VALUE

Polk County established their Wellness Center in 1997 to provide medical management to promote a healthy workforce under its Occupational Health Program.

- Medical care is provided for most occupational injuries.
- Services include Drug Free Workplace Program, infection control, annual TB testing and hepatitis vaccines.
- In its first five years of operation, the Occupational Health Program showed a cost savings of over \$5 million in workers' compensation injury care.

The Wellness Center expanded to offer employee health services for preventive care coupled with its value-based benefit design. As a result, the County reaped additional cost savings:

- X-ray costs are greatly reduced through a partnership with a local hospital.
- Lab costs are reduced by 75% through a local lab company.
- Greatly reduced the number of primary care insurance claims and minimized employee leave time associated with doctor's appointments.