



HAPPIER AND HEALTHIER WORKFORCE IMPACTED BY A CULTURE OF PRIMARY CARE

2022 not only brings with it the hope for a return to normalcy in our everyday lives, but also ballooning healthcare costs and a highly competitive hiring landscape enabled by increased remote opportunities. Employers have an incredible opportunity to offer solutions that will both delight and attract employees while saving the district money.

Many district employees are having trouble accessing timely primary care throughout the state and nation because of the nursing and primary care shortages. In addition, provider systems have largely shifted their focus to more complex care to recoup lost revenue over the last 18 months. As a result, district employees are frustrated with the wait and lead times for appointments and are driving lengthy distances to receive care in a timely manner. This leads to added stress and an increase in absenteeism at a time when substitutes are tough to come by. Several regions throughout the state have begun vetting options and even creating new opportunities with local providers to address primary care access issues.

Enhanced Primary Care is an evolving concept

Enhanced Primary Care aims to improve upon population health by offering increased patient care access and eliminating drive times to seek care, waiting in germ-filled waiting rooms, and visits that start late. Rushed visits and limited availability encourage patients to postpone care or use Urgent Care or the ER which results in high deductibles, high cost of labs, imaging, and prescription costs that are devastating to patients and employers. By

proactively addressing health issues as they arise with enhanced primary care, districts can help keep employees functioning optimally and commit to their health and well-being, while continuing to promote a health-oriented culture of a “happier healthier Workforce”

USI Gap Analysis

USI has a Gap Analysis process to assess the need for behavioral health, medical visits, labs, and imaging in the home or workspace at a fraction of the cost of traditional in-network clinics. USI also assesses the ability and merit of providing certain medications at no charge. In many instances, it is more cost effective to cover 550+ FREE medications to improve overall compliance of appropriate prescriptions and improve overall population health of the employer. While this option may cover 100% of ~ 550+ common medications, providers will write prescriptions for non-covered medications as well. This doesn't displace the need to use your health insurance, or pay in cash, for these non-covered medications. The concept compliments existing benefits/insurance plan types including self-funded, fully insured, high deductible, traditional, and more.

How USI Can Help

Many Wisconsin school districts have built in enhanced primary care options into their overall population health strategy. As a result, the feedback from members has been both positive and appreciative of the district addressing the evolving pandemic needs in a unique way that doesn't place a bigger financial or time burden on the employee

while delivering a more cost effective and sustainable benefits package. Districts are literally building engagement that is meeting the staff members where they are!

Several districts in the La Crosse area partner with a neighboring cash medical clinic that offers additional access for primary care needs at a much lower cost. The School District of La Crosse has partnered with The Neighborhood Family Clinic for over eight years. This partnership includes a robust wellness program that engages employees in primary care and the implementation of a health plan design that incentivizes employees to utilize the clinic. This solution not only reduces claim cost but allows employees and their families to receive primary care at the right time and at no cost to the employee. Doing all of this has allowed the school district to keep their premiums and plan design stable for over six years.

Other districts have been successful with partnering with a local provider for a near-site or on-site clinic. Dane County has seen districts achieve over 5-year rate holds on their health plan largely because of high-level engagement with primary care, efficient health systems and an overall commitment and engagement to “shared accountability” between the providers, district leadership, health plan and staff members.

Specifically, Sun Prairie has implemented an employee wellness clinic within the district and has achieved “platinum status” from WELCOA as one of only 9 employers in the nation for their wellness practices... much of which is a culture of engagement with their staff that feeds to their district clinic offering that is “wellness focused”. “It has been immensely rewarding and impactful to partner with our Employee Wellness Clinic to go 'above and beyond' to meet the wellness needs of our employees and their family members.,” says Karyn Richmond, District Wellness Coordinator. “Our mission is to create a

culture that supports and provides opportunities, tools, and resources that inspire all employees and their families to become full partners in managing their overall well-being. Through our partnership with our clinic, we have been able to provide staff and their family members with top quality, accessible, comprehensive and affordable care. Staff have been particularly appreciative of the convenience of our onsite flu and COVID vaccination clinics for staff, students, and family members, as well as free skin cancer screenings at the clinic. In addition to comprehensive preventative health care services and vaccinations, we have been able to work collaboratively with our practitioners to address the high need area of behavioral health by offering opportunities such as walking clubs, educational webinars, and healthy living discussions. All of these services are free to our staff and also provide them with opportunities to become familiar and comfortable with our practitioners, increasing the likelihood that they will visit our clinic. Supporting the wellness needs of our staff through robust services and programming has resulted in a happier and healthier workplace, along with the financial benefit of a 5-year insurance rate hold and significant claims cost avoidance savings.”

Waunakee Community School District has also achieved a 5-year rate hold from the insurance offering largely because of their engagement level with the health system with primary care. The district is in its 3rd year of sponsoring a staff wellness clinic that continues to demonstrate return on investment not only in rate stabilization, but also customized staff engagements to address staff vaccination needs. Brian Grabarski, Director of Human Resources with Waunakee Community School District notes “It is important to WCSD that our employees have easy access to quality non-emergency acute care. Our employees have shared that they see and feel the benefit of highly accessible appointments with a nurse practitioner



available just for staff and family plan members.”

Other examples include how USI worked with 7 Rock County Area Districts to build a pilot of Enhanced Primary Care that is delivering consistent improvements on access, behavioral health resources and overall engagement for staff in a preventive manner vs. reactionary. *“It has been an honor to be a part of the synergy between USI, our health provider, and engaged school district leadership as we design, build, and implement an enhanced-care model for our employees and families. This partnership has been a true testament of how a health provider can “meet employees where they are” to support systemic care by breaking down many barriers that often challenge patients and the serving health system,”* says Dr. Tad Wehner of the Edgerton School District.

Ultimately, we look around the state and recognize that there is not a one-size-fits all vehicle to maximize efficiencies, but we have

seen unique models in Elkhorn, East Troy, Eau Claire, Elmbrook, Sheboygan, Fond du lac, etc. They have found new and innovative ways to bring care to their employees in a timely and cost-effective manner by focusing on the provider vs. the distribution or insurance arm. Whether that means partnering with a local provider system or implementing solutions from outside vendors, there are options that will fit districts of all sizes and in many regions. Doing nothing and assuming insurance vendors alone are the answer will prove to be too costly in terms of financial impact to the plan, impact to population health of the staff and ultimately productivity of the student population.

[*Contact us for additional resources and guidance on this value-added service.*](#)

How can we help?

Experience the USI ONE Advantage® and learn how our highly specialized solutions and services can improve your employee benefits program.

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