

Best Practices

INNOVATIVE HEALTHCARE SOLUTIONS: GUNDERSEN LUTHERAN



Company:	Gundersen Lutheran
Location:	La Crosse, Wisconsin
Industry:	Healthcare provider
Size:	6,400 employees system wide
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BACKGROUND

Gundersen Lutheran is a comprehensive healthcare network including one of the nation's largest multi-specialty group medical practices, regional community clinics, hospitals, nursing homes, home care, behavioral health services, vision centers, pharmacies, and air and ground ambulances. The physician-led, not-for-profit healthcare system located throughout western Wisconsin, northeastern Iowa and southeastern Minnesota meets patients' needs for primary and specialized care with nearly 700 medical, dental and associate staff supported by a staff of over 6,000. It also includes a tertiary referral center, a teaching hospital with 325 beds and a Level II Trauma & Emergency Center. Consistently ranked in the upper 5% of hospitals in the country, Gundersen

Lutheran is the designated Western Campus for the University of Wisconsin (UW) School of Medicine and UW-Madison School of Nursing.

Gundersen Lutheran offers specialty care through departments such as the Center for Cancer & Blood Disorders, Norma J. Vinger Center for Breast Care, Eye Institute, Heart Institute, Neuroscience Center, Orthopaedics and Center for Women.

HEALTH PLAN DESIGN

Gundersen Lutheran offers several health insurance plan designs for employees. All preventive services are covered at 100 percent and generic drug purchase is emphasized. The Gunder 90 program allows employees to obtain a 3 month supply of generics for the price of 2 months. Gundersen Lutheran is currently looking at a health reimbursement account (HRA) option.

INTEGRATED HEALTH & WELLNESS PRODUCTIVITY MANAGEMENT

Gundersen Lutheran's community programs are based on experience with their own employees through a program called Integrated Health & Wellness Productivity Management (IHPM)

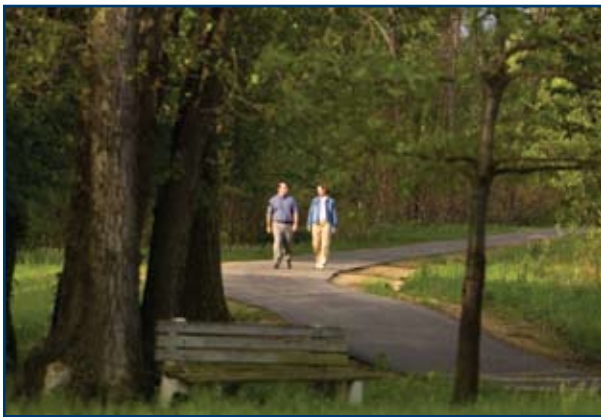
The vision of the IHPM program is "to reduce the healthcare costs that our employees incur through appropriate utilization of the healthcare system while, at the same time, improving the health and lifestyle of our employees."

The objectives of IHPM are implemented through the My Health program, which consists of a series of activities designed to engage employees in assessing and improving their health status.

The primary activities in My Health are:

- A written Health Risk Appraisal (HRA). Blood tests are not required, but are encouraged in accordance with Gundersen Lutheran's Preventive Care Guidelines. HRAs are available to spouses.

- Confidential My Health Screening for employees
 - ▶ Body mass indexes are calculated
 - ▶ Carbon monoxide tests are conducted to detect tobacco usage
 - ▶ New employees are given a full physical
- Stress management
- Addiction management
- Weight management
- Physical activities
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- Vaccines, flu shots and nicotine counseling



IHPM also includes a number of other initiatives designed to engage employees including:

- Healthy options in vending machines and cafeterias.
- On-site exercise facilities are provided at two Gundersen Lutheran locations and arrangements are made with the YMCA or other local exercise facilities at all other locations.
- Walking trails are marked out at some facilities and Gundersen Lutheran is working with the city of La Crosse to expand their walking and biking trail system.
- The “Shoe Crew” provides activity challenges and rewards.
- Nicotine cessation programs include “Getting You Started to Stop” and “Journey to Freedom”.
- Gundersen Lutheran publishes a periodic newsletter called Prevention Connection which includes fitness, nutrition, and other wellness information and ideas.
- The Gundersen Lutheran website includes links to all pertinent health programs and information.
- EAP is provided by Gundersen Lutheran staff at no cost to employees.

REWARDS

As part of the My Health Program, Gundersen Lutheran provides My Health Reward incentives to encourage employees to participate in My Health activities.

All employees are eligible for My Health Rewards based on participation in the HRA and confidential screening and by meeting program criteria.

Employees can receive monthly rewards of \$10 or \$30 depending on the extent to which they meet the program criteria.

INDICATORS AND OUTCOMES

The My Health program incorporates a number of health indicators and outcomes to measure individual and corporate-wide progress. These include:

- Obesity
- Binge Drinking
- Smoking status
- Excess Stress
- Sedentary lifestyle
- Depression
- Drinking & Driving

Additional measures include:

- Enrollment in smoking cessation programs
- Tracking the percentage of employees with 3 or more health risks
- Tracking of unscheduled absences

Several financial indicators are tracked to obtain empirical outcomes including:

- Percent use of generic drugs
- Hospital admissions/1,000 employees
- Worker’s Compensation rate/100 FTE

STATISTICS

In 2007, Gundersen Lutheran reported the following My Health statistics based on 6,400 employees:

- 3,998 completed the HRA
- 3,163 completed the HRA and confidential screening
- 524 spouses completed the HRA
- 2,691 qualified for the \$360 reward
- 545 qualified for a \$120 reward

As a result of this comprehensive program, Gundersen Lutheran has been recognized with the Gold Award by WELCOA¹ for their wellness activities.

GUNDERSEN LUTHERAN COMMUNITY & PREVENTIVE CARE SERVICES

Gundersen Lutheran Community & Preventive Care Services (CPCS) provides and coordinates prevention, education and health promotion programming and research for Gundersen Lutheran employees, patients and the community. Internally, CPCS employs experts in areas such as stress management, smoking cessation and healthy eating.

Focus areas of service at CPCS include:

- Stress management
- Physical activity
- Healthy aging
- Smoking cessation
- Alcohol and other drug abuse prevention
- Women's Health
- Worksite wellness

COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING

Gundersen Lutheran's experience with their own employees is transferred to the community in general through Business Health Services, whose objectives support those of My Health; to keep the employees of businesses in the community safe, healthy, productive and on the job.

A Business Health Services (BHS) team regularly visits local businesses. A range of services are provided as a package or on an ad hoc basis. Fees are charged for services. Employers don't have to be a member of the Gundersen Lutheran Health Plan to participate, but they must be in the Gundersen Lutheran service area. BHS also sponsors educational programs and wellness challenges for community employers.

Business Health Services include:

- Industrial Rehabilitation Services
- Comprehensive Occupational Health Services
- EAP Services
- Workers Compensation Case Management
- Substance Abuse Professional Services (SAP)
- BusinessLink
- Prescription Safety Eyewear

Other community activities include:

- Tobacco cessation programs
- Stress management programs

- Physical activity programs
- Healthy aging programs
- Women's health programs
- Speakers bureau
- Health risk appraisals
- Worksite wellness education

CPCS partners with the following local organizations to promote healthy lifestyles:

- Great American Smoke out
- Senior Wellness Expo
- Bike to Work Week
- United Way
- Various community walks and runs



Gundersen Lutheran participates in the La Crosse Area Medical Health Science Consortium with other educational and health partners.² They are a focal point for community cooperative activities and have developed an online scorecard of regional healthcare indicators.

REFERENCES:

¹WELCOA www.welcoa.org

²La Crosse Area Medical Health Science Consortium <http://home.lmhsconsortium.org>

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608-258-3400 or mshoys@wmc.org

View other Wisconsin Business Best Practices Reports at <http://www.wmc.org/healthcare/index.php>

Best Practices

WMC's healthcare agenda includes initiatives to encourage employers to take innovative steps to improve the health status of their employees and control their healthcare costs. WMC has identified employers whose healthcare initiatives can serve as best practices for others to use as models for their own initiatives.

Healthcare Best Practices—Common Lessons Learned

WMC has interviewed a number of companies who have taken bold steps to control their healthcare costs and improve the health status of their employees. From those best practices, we have seen a series of common elements or lessons learned. A summary follows:

- *Employees must be engaged in programs to improve their health. Incentives are essential to engaging employees.*
- *Innovative practices come from companies with executives who push the boundaries and drive their employees to seek change.*
- *While cash or tangible incentives sweeten the pot, reduction (or increase!) of the employee's share of health insurance premiums is the most effective strategy.*
- *A broad array of wellness options engages more employees. Flexibility of access during and off of normal working hours increases participation.*
- *Successful programs emphasize improved productivity and cost savings, and often focus on mental, as well as physical, well-being.*
- *Most employers recognize that "doing the right thing" for their employees' health is incentive enough to invest in wellness programs. For those with this philosophy, positive returns on investment follow.*
- *Health Risk Assessments provide the basis for most programs because they immediately engage employees. It is equally important to engage spouses, and to the degree possible, dependents enrolled in family plans, in health assessments and wellness activities.*
- *Consumer-driven plan designs experience slow employee acceptance unless significant incentives or disincentives are provided. Employers must educate and aggressively market the benefits of these plans to employees in order to get participation.*
- *As programs evolve, employers realize the need to dedicate an individual to develop, market, and monitor wellness programs. As programs mature, they need to be integrated, such as the coordination of exercise programs, medication regimens and nutritional guidelines for high-risk employees.*
- *Goals and objectives with appropriate metrics must be clearly stated and communicated to employees. They have to understand why it is important to them and to the company.*
- *Management of chronic/high risk diseases provides the best opportunity for cost savings. The 80/20 rule applies; 80 percent of healthcare costs are spent on 20 percent of the healthcare encounters.*
- *Almost any size company can implement programs to improve wellness and cut costs. The range of options is scalable to company size. Help is out there from companies who have already implemented best practices.*
- *And finally, leading companies are more than willing to share their health care best practices with other companies in their communities.*