



# Employers and hospitals *Partnering* for better care



## BELLIN HEALTH AND NORTHEAST WISCONSIN TECHNICAL COLLEGE *PARTNERING TO IMPROVE HEALTH, SAVE COSTS*

*Wisconsin hospitals and health systems share a common mission to improve access to care. That is why they are forming partnerships with local employers to develop onsite services, making it easier for employees to meet with a physician, nurse or wellness coach. These partnerships are helping employers hold the line on health care costs, prevent workplace injuries and reduce worker's compensation costs. All while creating a healthier community and with that, a healthier Wisconsin.*

*Over the next few weeks, the Wisconsin Hospital Association will share a series of articles that illustrate the innovative and effective programs that are being created in our state that are keeping employees, and their families, healthier.*



CAMPUS CARE, a collaboration between Northeast Wisconsin Technical College (NWTC) and Bellin Health, is bringing down health care spending for NWTC while giving employees and students easy-access options for care.

Through an onsite health and wellness center, NWTC employees can choose from many preventive and acute care options including treatment for chronic diseases like hypertension, high cholesterol and diabetes. They can also get immunizations, allergy treatments, complete physicals and blood drawn for certain tests.

Free services include treatment for infections, migraines, allergies, minor injury treatment and simple lab tests for things like mono, strep and pregnancy. Fitness and personal training, physical therapy, nutrition services as well as health coaching are all offered at the clinic. And for mental health, the Employee Assistance Program is there to help with issues that might not be as easy to define.

Valarie Wunderlich, director of benefits and compensation in NWTC's Human Resources Department, says these free services help create a "culture of health and wellness," with a long-term focus on better health through preventive action. For example, she points to the physical therapy option as a must for early intervention.



"If an employee has an ache and pain in the knee or back when running, they can go see a therapist at no cost," she said. "They work with you on form, or maybe they need to do some therapy, but that could be preventing a bigger issue."

She said 96 percent of their early preventive care is resolved in physical therapy, so there's usually no need for orthopedic surgeries or expensive MRIs.

"We are saving costs by taking care of things early on," she said.

Since the collaboration between NWTC and Bellin began in 2011, the clinic has been building out its offerings to cover areas of special concern.

At one point, NWTC made the decision to ramp up its physical therapy by bringing on a personal trainer, getting employees more active in hopes of preventing injuries. This was done because at the time, the number one category for medical claims was musculoskeletal.

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**– Valarie Wunderlich, director, benefits and compensation, NWTC**

Between 2015 and 2016, NWTC's spend on musculoskeletal claims dropped from \$1.5 million to \$1 million—a big reduction, which Wunderlich says is at least partly due to efforts with personal training and therapy.

As well as keeping premium increases below average, the program has led to significant cost savings through direct preventive action, Wunderlich says. Partnering with Bellin means NWTC can examine employee data constantly to take strategic action. In 2013, NWTC was looking at its data and seeing a lot of people with heart issues. Bellin then offered a free heart calcium screening test, which normally costs about \$50, for free to 52 individuals. Of that number, 18 needed further attention for issues like aortic aneurysms and others.

"Had it not been caught early, that would have been very expensive for the health plan and very expensive for the person," she said.

The partnership also incentivizes employees to take their health into their own hands by offering a program in which premium costs are discounted for making health improvements through specific programs and activities. Wunderlich says this structure has led to a much higher rate of participation than other organizations in the area have been able to achieve with comparable programs.

"We want people to participate—if they're focused on health, they will work on things they need to change," she said.

*This profile appears in the Wisconsin Technology Council's recent publication, "Taking the Pulse - How Quality Healthcare Builds a Better Bottom Line." See the Tech Council publication here: <http://wisconsintechcouncil.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Taking-the-Pulse-Healthcare-Quality-Report.pdf>*

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