



"As a county office, we believe we serve as role models to our community to keep active and take care of our health. We are thrilled that we've already seen the positive change it has made on our employees' lifestyles and their families, and we are excited about getting more participants on board."

Michelle Stewart
Employee Clinic and Wellness Coordinator
Bexar County

In 2007, Bexar County, a government agency serving 1.5 million residents in south-central Texas, including the San Antonio metropolitan area, conducted health screenings across its 4,500 employees and closely evaluated annual medical claims. The County discovered an unusually high prevalence of lifestyle-related conditions across all departments, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels and type 2 diabetes. These findings, plus escalating healthcare costs, and County employees' heightened interest in work-health balance, triggered Bexar County's pursuit for an effective, motivational, and integrated physical activity-based wellness program that would help the County achieve a healthier workforce.

Designing and launching a successful wellness program did not come without challenges, however. Like many government agencies, Bexar County has a dispersed workforce, supports retirees, and needed to determine how to best integrate a new wellness program into its existing wellness efforts, including nutrition and health seminars, weight loss challenges, and on-site exercise classes. A comprehensive wellness program that would appeal to and energize different groups, with varying levels of comfort around technology and fitness was needed to be successful.

By collaborating with its insurer, local health club partner, and Virgin HealthMiles, Bexar County has created a comprehensive wellness program that serves a dispersed workforce and helps employees better manage preventable and costly lifestyle-driven conditions associated with inactivity. The County now boasts a 34% participation rate, more than double the industry average. In the last year, 20% of Bexar County's employees participating in the County's wellness program who were either previously inactive or getting below the CDC's recommended level of activity have become active.





"It's a long term investment. As you grow your company, you want to be able to grow your wellness program. More employees are getting involved and excited, and we are finally more aware of what they are doing every day in terms of their physical activity. It's given us the opportunity to affect our employees' health in a positive way."

Tracy Allen
Benefits Manager
Rush- Copley Medical Center

While employee wellness is a high priority for many corporations, one of the most daunting challenges HR and wellness managers often face is how to achieve accountability and tackle labor intensive program administration. Illinois-based Rush-Copley Medical Center was no exception. A long-time wellness advocate, the self insured medical center offers a variety of wellness initiatives for its more than 1,600 employees. Health and nutrition lunch-and-learns, tobacco cessation programs, free glucose and cholesterol screenings as well as free memberships to a fitness clubs are just a handful of programs the company offers to its employees. Yet, Rush-Copley found it difficult to pinpoint how active employees really were and how to reward them with credits toward their healthcare premiums. Chronic diseases had driven up the company's healthcare costs over the past five years, and the wellness team was eager to figure out exact activity engagement levels and the quantitative impact wellness and obesity was having on the company's expenses.

Rush-Copley found that within four months of implementing the Virgin HealthMiles program, over 40% of employees were participating and administration load was reduced. The program enabled employees to earn up to \$500 in payroll credits applied toward healthcare premiums and the underlying technology of the program also proved to be tremendously beneficial. Not only was the company able to accurately measure activity levels, they were now able to upload pre-existing glucose and cholesterol data to begin evaluating trends. Manual program administration was no longer necessary and quantifiable and detailed progress reports could be created at a moment's notice.

Though its Virgin HealthMiles program is still new to its suite of wellness offerings, Rush-Copley illustrates how companies can make wellness a win-win for both the employer and the employee.





“Employees are actively monitoring their health because they now have the tools to do so. We’ve seen improvements in overall wellness and decreases in obesity and stage one and stage two hypertension.”

Emory Cook
Director, Human Resource Programs
Shands Jacksonville Medical Center

Shands Jacksonville Medical Center is the largest of nine hospitals in the Shands Healthcare family with 3,300 employees. Like all hospitals, Shands Jacksonville Medical Center has a very diverse group of employees – from nurses, to housekeeping staff to administrators. Because healthcare workers are focused on patient care, the assumption is that they themselves should be in better shape than the general population. Not true, according to Alicia Hinte, Wellness Project Manager for Shands Jacksonville. “Since they are so focused on the health of others, it’s really hard to get hospital employees to focus on their own health. Our employee population is reflective of the general U.S. population in terms of obesity and chronic illnesses.”

Shands Jacksonville had previously implemented various wellness initiatives in an effort to improve the health of its employees, but it was not achieving the desired results since these programs were disjointed and relevant to only a small portion of their employee population. Unlike a corporate setting where employees typically sit in front of computers during the day, most hospital employees are on their feet caring for patients. The hospital came to the realization that it needed a single, comprehensive program that would appeal to all of its employees, be easy to implement and use, effectively communicate information and provide motivation, and deliver concrete, measurable results.

Turning to Virgin HealthMiles, Shands Jacksonville implemented a physical-activity based wellness program that engages a broad range of its employees, rewards employees for their activity and program participation, unites the hospital’s various wellness initiatives and drives participation in these programs. With 75% of its employees participating in its wellness program, Shands Jacksonville has leveraged the strong sense of community amongst hospital employees and has seen increased activity levels and overall health improvements, which are contributing to enhanced patient care.

