



**2010 VACo Achievement Awards**  
 Deadline: June 1, 2010

**Application Form**

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. Deadline: June 1, 2010.

**Program Information**

Locality Montgomery County, VA (Human Resources)  
 Program Title Onsite Clinic and Wellness Programs  
 Program Category Organizational Development (9)  
 Population Category (4) 50,001 to 100,000

**Contact Information**

Name Ruth Richey  
 Title Director of Public Information  
 Department Public Information  
 Complete Mailing Address 755 Roanoke St. SU 2G Christiansburg, VA 24073  
 Telephone # 540-381-6887 Fax # 540-382-6943  
 E-mail richeyrl@montgomerycountyva.gov

**Signature of county administrator or chief administrative officer**

Name F. Craig Meadows  
 Title County Administrator  
 Signature\* *F. Craig Meadows*

\*Entries without this signature will not be accepted.

ATTN: 2010 Achievement Awards Program  
 Virginia Association of Counties  
 1207 East Main Street, Suite 300  
 Richmond, Va. 23219-3627

address service requested

**Call for Entries**

# Onsite Clinic and Wellness Programs

2010 VACo Achievement Awards

Montgomery County, VA



## **Onsite Clinic and Wellness Programs Montgomery County, Virginia**

### **1. Brief overview**

Montgomery County implemented a fully integrated on-site disease management Clinic and Wellness Programs to focus on early detection and prevention in order to improve employees' health and "bend the cost curve" of insurance renewals and productivity losses. Through education and free access to a nurse practitioner, employees are empowered to make healthy lifestyle choices to achieve their personal best.

As a measure of success, 73 percent of employees are currently taking advantage of the wellness programs and clinic, which is conveniently located at the County's Government Center. In 2008-2009, the Clinic treated and helped improve the quality of life for five employees with acute chronic conditions (heart attack, cancer, paralysis, hypertension and stroke). The early detection of potential heart attacks, strokes, and cancer have potentially prevented death.

The County's proactive approach implementing a workplace wellness program that is easily accessible and free to employees has improved employee's health, decreased absenteeism and reduced healthcare costs. By going beyond the traditional programs offered once a year by many other employers, the positive effects are seen on the faces and in the performance of our employees.

The programs have improved morale and helped employees put their health to the forefront of their priorities. The cost of these programs -- which is less than the cost of one heart attack or stroke -- is meeting the County's goals to keep health insurance affordable for employees and to have a productive and healthy workforce.

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**2. Problem/Need for the Program**

Faced with escalating health insurance costs, Montgomery County began looking for ways to keep insurance costs from growing at such a rapid pace, due partly to an increasing number of employees with high risk factors. From the total population of employees assessed (332) in 2007, 73.2 percent were identified as having one or more measurable high risk and/or chronic conditions. Of the 73.2 percent, 5.7 percent were identified as having five or more high risk factors. In addition, aging employees also displayed the development of one or more health conditions.

Unhealthy employees resulted in an increase in absenteeism and time away from work to see a doctor. Sick leave hours in 2007 totaled 36,660 and employees spent an average of 180 minutes away from work for healthcare visits.

It was also discovered that many employees did not have a primary care physician (PCP) and had not made an appointment for preventative care in a year or longer. There also was a high utilization of emergency room and urgent care visits.

**3. Innovation/partnering/collaboration**

HealthSTAT, Inc., a leading provider of onsite primary care, was selected to provide high health risk, and disease management services at a clinic located in the County's main office building. The onsite Clinic coordinates with physicians, pharmacists and other support providers to ensure that employees are receiving the best care.

The County's Wellness Program – "In SHAPE" – complements the clinic by offering wellness and prevention programs that focus on providing opportunities for employees to improve and manage their health through behavioral changes. Weight Watchers, smoking cessation, diabetes management, heart

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healthy activities and more are offered during lunch hours for all employees. The County also provides motivational incentives for participation in the wellness programs, such as half-day vacations, contributions to medical spending accounts and other giveaways.

For employees who want a workout before or after work hours or during lunch, there is a fitness center with exercise equipment, locker rooms and showers. It is open 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. at the Government Center.

The nurse practitioner staffing the clinic provides minor to mid-level healthcare services such as early identification of health risks, diagnosis of medical conditions, wellness coaching/advice and referrals to physicians and specialists. Other services include ordering lab tests and X-rays, writing prescriptions and providing immunizations.

A five year budget plan was established for implementation and growth. The County participates in ongoing strategy sessions to track results and update future goals and objectives. Some of the modifications implemented upon request include: expanded hours, an on-line appointment scheduler, alcohol and drug testing for new hires, flu shots and hepatitis B series.

Human Resources, which oversees the program, continually strives to increase usage of the Clinic through the intranet, newsletters, flyers, interoffice communications and emails.

The clinic and wellness programs are fully supported by the County's elected leaders, county administration and department directors. Members of the Board of Supervisors were proactively

## **Onsite Clinic and Wellness Programs Montgomery County, Virginia**

involved in visiting other clinics in the initial decision making. These supporters have also led by example, using the Clinic and taking part in the Wellness Programs.

Clinic benefits include:

- “free” on-site services (including lab work and screenings)
- immediate access to a nurse practitioner
- fast and frequent confidential appointments
- no co-payments or deductibles
- savings from lost time away from work
- personalized health analysis and annual health risk assessment

An Employee Wellness Committee was formed to help guide the success of the “In SHAPE” Wellness Activities. Wellness guidelines were established, and brochures -- along with a logo and theme -- were created. The theme “Staying in SHAPE” represents: Screenings, Healthy improvements, Assessments, Prevention and Exercise.

Employees can earn \$10 per quarter for completed wellness activities (up to \$30 per quarter). These funds are deposited into the employee’s Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA) or Health Savings Account (HSA) to be used for reimbursement of qualified medical expenses.

The activities include:

- Walking Club
- Challenge Walking Club (10,000 steps or more per day)
- Exercise Club

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- Healthy Breakfast Eating Club

On average, 44 participants qualify for these funds at one or more levels on a quarterly basis. The County also provides Lunch and Learn seminars on various topics for all employees.

Approximately 20 to 25 participants have signed up for each session of Weight Watchers At-Work since it began in 2007. As an incentive, the County pays half of the fees upfront and the employee is responsible for the remaining payment, which can be deducted from payroll for convenience. Additionally, participants submitted recipes that were included in their very own Weight Watchers Cookbook that is available on the County's Intranet site and was printed and distributed to all members and other interested employees.

The Parks and Recreation staff designed walking trails at multiple levels of intensity for several County facilities, including an indoor trail at the Government Center. Trails maps are posted on the intranet for easy access and downloading. Employees are encouraged to "walk" their way to good health. Each walker receives a free pedometer.

Annual Influenza vaccinations are given in the fall each year at no charge to employees participating in the onsite clinic. Non-clinic participant and dependents are charged \$15 for the annual flu vaccine. This year, H1N1 vaccines were ordered based on the Center for Disease Control's (CDC) priority guidelines. The vaccines were administered at no charge to employees through our Clinic.

#### **4. Program Cost/Staffing**

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The County financed startup and ongoing costs for the Clinic, including the time needed for the nurse practitioner to perform her duties, the required space (with access to water source), miscellaneous equipment (printer, fax, lockable filing cabinets, desk and chair, telephone, Internet connection) and ongoing supplies. The current annual costs of all aspects of the program are approximately \$160,000 to serve 333 employees.

The nurse practitioner is contracted for 56 hours, and there are fees for lab and pathology work, program administration, data management, disease management, vaccine clinics and an on-line appointment scheduler on the intranet.

The County's health insurance carrier also makes annual financial contributions toward the program.

### **5. Program Results/Success**

As a result of the onsite Clinic and wellness programs, the County has seen a reduction in absenteeism, lower health claims, lower emergency room and urgent care visits, and increased Clinic participation. The County's health insurance increases have lowered to single digit and low teens, with a 10 percent decrease in the first year.

Through Wellness In SHAPE Programs there have been behavior changes, such as weight loss, frequent use of the Fitness Center and more employees walking for exercise.

During the first six series of Weight Watchers, 1,423 pounds were lost. In the past year, out of five enrolled in the Smoking Cessation class, two employees quit smoking.



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**Absenteeism:** Since the inception of the Clinic, the County has seen a slight reduction in the total number of sick leave hours used. In 2009, County employees used the lowest number of sick leave hours – 35,890 – since the Clinic opened. This compares to 36,660 sick leave hours used in 2007.

**Time Away From Work Savings:** Prior to the start up of the Clinic, employees would spend an average of 180 minutes away from work per visit to see a doctor. With the use of the onsite Clinic, employees spend approximately 30 minutes or less for an appointment, resulting in a time savings of 150 minutes. This has resulted in a savings of \$41.38 per visit, with the average employee wage at \$16.55 per hour. This savings of time has increased productivity and morale, while also reducing absenteeism.

Additionally, the Clinic has helped employees with chronic conditions keep working longer, driving down the cost of turnover.

**High Risk Factors:** In April 2009, 71.1 percent of employees assessed were identified as having one or more high risk factors and/or chronic conditions; 5.7 percent had five or more high risk factors. In 2007, 73.2 percent of employees were assessed with high risk factors, resulting in a decrease of 2.1 percent. From 2007 to 2009 health risk assessments indicate a 6 percent reduction in the total cholesterol level of the highest risk group and a 5 percent reduction in hypertension cases for the highest risk groups.

**Underutilization of Primary Care Services:** Many County employees did not have a primary care physician and had not made an appointment for preventive care for the past year or more prior to the inception of the Clinic. Therefore, it was not unexpected that employees frequently visited emergency rooms and urgent care facilities. The Clinic's critical role in referring employees has resulted in more employees now having primary care physicians and fewer visits for specialty care and emergency services.