Synopsis

Sukup Manufacturing Co. is a family-owned manufacturer of grain bins, grain dryers, material handling equipment and pre-engineered metal buildings. To address employee retention and the need for increased workplace flexibility, Sukup built an on-site clinic connected to the main manufacturing building at the Sheffield, Iowa headquarters.

The clinic is free or of low cost to employees and open five days a week with a registered nurse and one day a week with an Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner. Tele-counseling and health coaching are also available to Sukup employees through the clinic. The clinic features five patient rooms, one private tele-counseling conference room, a drug testing compliant bathroom and a full lab for biometrics, viral tests and blood tests.
Impact Statement

Sukup’s on-site clinic has had tremendous benefits for its employees as well as their families. Having an on-site clinic has lowered the hurdle to accessing quality healthcare for many Sukup employees, who oftentimes drove far distances in rural Iowa for basic care. Additionally, the clinic has significantly reduced employee healthcare costs, including reduced amounts that would otherwise be spent on co-pays elsewhere. While the initial investment of time and money in building a clinic was substantial, the captured savings through increased productivity and lower reaction time with workers’ compensation have covered the operating costs.

“RESEARCH SHOWS THAT ONSITE CLINICS CAN ADD SIGNIFICANT VALUE TO THE WORKPLACE. SOME BENEFITS THE COMPANY HOPES TO REALIZE ARE EARLIER DETECTION AND TREATMENT OF ILLNESS, FEWER EMERGENCY ROOM VISITS, AND REINFORCING A CULTURE OF WELLNESS HERE AT SUKUP.”

– SAMANTHA PETERSBURG, HUMAN RESOURCES REPRESENTATIVE

One of the greatest benefits to the clinic for Sukup has been increased productivity due to cutting travel time for employees going to appointments off-site. Because the facility is dedicated for Sukup employees, wait times are also reduced, and employees can return to work as quickly as possible. One employee reported on the first day of the clinic’s opening that he clocked out, was seen, and clocked back in within 20 minutes and was easily able to make up lost time that same day.

Furthermore, in increasing access to quality healthcare for its employees, Sukup has developed a generally healthier workforce and has been able to track an increase in productivity because of this change to their operations. The clinic has also been able to address unique company needs, such as providing physicals and drug tests to meet Department of Transportation requirements for trucking and operation of vehicles. Having a healthier workforce has resulted in a lower reaction time for workplace compensation as well.

Tele-counseling has also been of great benefit to Sukup and one of the easier clinic operations to implement. Tele-counseling is the least expensive and most easily replicable of Sukup’s clinic initiatives, as it only requires a strong broadband connection and a dedicated space. Having a “clinic appointment” for Sukup employees reduces the stigma of getting seen and furthers Sukup’s mission of having a “happier and healthier workforce” according to Sukup’s General Counsel and STEP Ahead Alumna Emily Schmitt. Within the first two weeks of the clinic opening, it serviced eight tele-counseling consultations, when only 54 took place through the employee assistance program throughout the entire previous year.

“WE’VE SEEN SIGNIFICANT UTILIZATION JUST THROUGH THE FIRST YEAR DUE TO THE CONVENIENCE OF CARE AND IT SHOWS JUST WHAT OUR CULTURE HERE AT SUKUP IS ABOUT – ITS RELATIONSHIPS WITH ITS EMPLOYEES.”

– EMILY SCHMITT, GENERAL COUNSEL
Research and review other on-site clinics especially in the company’s local area to understand offerings, needs, regulations, etc.

Review the company’s historical healthcare costs and trends, utilizing at least two years worth of records to compare to each other. However, more years of data will be more useful for the comparison.

Consider your company’s needs and financial capacity for clinic operations, especially whether the clinic will be self-funded, whether the company can support an increase in health care costs for a three-year period as the clinic is established, the size of the company and facility needs, and employee trends in pursuing preventative screenings below average, regular doctor visits and ER usage.

Decide whether the clinic should have a Registered Nurse, Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner or a Medical Doctor on staff.

Send out Requests for Proposals to medical providers, which must include whether they would require the clinic to be under commissioning standards, which vary by state.

In building or repurposing the facility, the company must consider:

- Compliance reviews with local hospital and inspector. Example: all cabinets, art, chairs in the Sukup facility are wipeable and do not contain fabric.
- Creating a space for tele-counseling (if applicable) with a video feed and phone line connection in a private conference room
- Installing a timeclock for shopfloor employees near the entrance of the facility.
- Interview staff for the clinic with the medical provider
  - For Sukup, this was the most important decision and advise waiting for the right fit in finding staff.
- Negotiate a non-compete for the staff in case the company switches providers but elects to keep the staff.
- Review workers’ compensation procedures to ensure they fit with clinic operations.
- Educate the employee base about the clinic’s offerings before opening.
  - A sample flyer can be found here.