
To print: Select **File** and then **Print** from your browser's menu.

This story was printed from **Seminole Chronicle**.

Site URL: <http://www.seminolechronicle.com>.



CLINIC: Sherry Dugan, Dr. Carol Grand and Abbey Everett work in the Wellness and Health Center.

The Health and Wellness Center for city of Oviedo employees is now open

By Amy K.D. Tobik

March 24, 2010

OVIEDO - The doctor is in - and ready to see city of Oviedo employees.

This month marks the debut of an innovative wellness program available to city of Oviedo employees currently enrolled in the city

health plan.

The city of Oviedo Health and Wellness Center was established in an effort to halt the increasing costs of health insurance while providing on-site access to health care.

The new health care option was created in an effort to avoid passing the increased cost of coverage to city workers.

The center, operated by Care Here and the Crown Group, is located in a modular building tucked behind the Annex, by the Oviedo City Hall and fire department. The building, previously occupied by the Fire Administration Office, was completely renovated and transformed into a physician's office, complete with waiting room and several examination rooms.

Deputy Mayor Dominic Persampiere said the Oviedo Care Here facility, which is the only one of its kind in Seminole County, is modeled after recently established facilities in Apopka and Ocoee.

The clinic is currently open 16 hours a week with a physician, registered nurse and a radiological technician on staff.

While the city provided the building, it does not run the clinic in any way, and all medical records are maintained through Care Here.

Bob Bentkofsky, Oviedo assistant city manager, said the new plan does not change the health insurance plan already in place. "The best way to describe it is to say it sits on top of the plan," Bentkofsky said. "Employees are not required to use the clinic; they can stay with their current physician if they choose."

There are limited options available for containing and driving down costs, Bentkofsky said. "The way higher costs are normally addressed is by shifting the costs to the employee in the form of higher co-pays and deductibles," he said.

The latest plan, he said, creates an opportunity to substantially reduce overall costs, from primary care to prescriptions, because those claims will no longer be run through insurance.

"The prescription costs we incur and the office visits that are made normally to your primary care physician are about 40 percent of all of our health insurance costs in Oviedo," he said.

Patients will also not be charged a co-pay for doctor visits or for many prescriptions. "We will see a savings on the cost of the prescriptions that we purchase due to the buying power the contractor has," Bentkofsky said.

Another perk is that workers under the city health care plan will not be required to take sick leave to go to an appointment at the center.

There are also long-term benefits of the clinic, Bentkofsky said, because the clinic also focuses on wellness and prevention by conducting health risk assessments. "It is very comprehensive in nature, and the idea behind it is to get at potential chronic illness before it becomes chronic," he said.

The clinic is prepared to complete needed occupational testing as well as worker's compensation cases.

Currently, the health center includes a digital X-ray machine, a treadmill connected to an ECG for stress tests, and EKG machine, a spirometer used to measure the volume of air inspired and expired by the lungs and an audio booth to conduct hearing tests.

While the clinic is only open to city employees on the health plan, Bentkofsky said all taxpayers ultimately will benefit over time because of the reduced cost of city health insurance.

"In our business plan we estimated our savings over the next five years will be between half a million to \$1 million. We ran a couple of different scenarios, and we expect it to be in that range," he said.

Bentkofsky said he believes other cities will eventually follow suit in attempt to contain health care costs and provide accessible care.

Because of the size of the modular building, the clinic may eventually expand if specialists are needed or if Oviedo decides to coordinate the program with another city.

Persampiere also anticipates more cities in the county will join forces, creating more facilities for employees. "Our employees can use any Care Here facility out of the 70 or so throughout the state of Florida. That really builds a great synergy," he said.

Persampiere said he is excited about the future prospects. "The City Council along with the city staff,

we are always looking at creative ways to save taxpayers money," he said. "This is a complete win-win. It will save us money over time and better services for our employees."

Note: Most newer browsers don't need a print-friendly version of this article. Just click **File**, then **Print** from your browser's menu at the previous page.

© 2010 Seminole Chronicle