

FAQs for Health Systems Looking to Deliver Wellness Services to Local Businesses

Health systems are in a unique position in the sense that they can create a culture of health and wellness both in their workplace and community by expanding their internal health and wellness programs to employers as part of their strategic planning.

If you're a wellness leader at a health system, developing and implementing a wellness program for local employers can be a great opportunity for program expansion and new revenue channels. If you are thinking about expanding services to business in your region there are many questions and processes that need to be considered.

Kathy Keane and Court Grady from MercyCare Business Health Services (BHS) provided their insights to CoreHealth by answering the following questions:

1. What was the general process that led to implementing a wellness program to employers?

MercyCare's mission is to enhance the health of the community. What first started as an employee wellness program eventually became an outside offering once leadership saw the need for preventative services. Buy-in from leadership was key.

2. How many corporate clients do you serve?

We serve about 2,000 employers in the community which include providing occupational health services. We have about 75,000 individuals participating in our integrated wellness solutions and offerings. We have about 25% market share.

3. How many staff do you need to effectively manage that population?

We have a couple of primary staff members that are dedicated to managing the business development and account management roles as well as supplemental staff like our own internal coaches. It's important to have dedicated staff you can count on.

An advantage to being part of a health system is that we can easily access subject matter experts and consult with them as required. It's important that leadership is supportive of this crossover of in-house expertise.

5. What programs did you provide when first starting out and how has it evolved?

We started with fitness classes, health assessments and screenings which eventually evolved into fully comprehensive wellness programs that now includes coaching.

We provide a variety of à la carte services where people can choose from classes, events and support groups to fitness challenges, coaching, dietician and nutrition services and educational tools, health assessments and more. A broad mix of wellness solutions is essential. Employers are looking for variety and flexibility - a one-size-fits-all approach just doesn't work. Every organization has unique needs, corporate cultures, and goals.

The important thing to note is that our programs have continuously adapted and evolved over the years to keep in line with what both the community and the industry was demanding at the time.

Wellness is an ever-changing industry, so adaptability and flexibility are key.

6. What type of competition have you seen in the industry?

Over the past 10+ years there has been an increase in companies offering wellness services. So now local companies have more options to work with national wellness providers. We see this more with larger companies that have global employees and need services that can reach all their employees at this scale.

While we can and do service employees outside of our immediate region, there are considerations in doing so.

7. What products and services would you recommend offering when starting out?

We'd recommend bundling a package of integrated wellness solutions because there won't be one offering that will sell on its own. It's important to offer a variety of programs and be flexible. Your program shouldn't be a one-size fits all approach.

8. How do you administer and manage programs for so many corporate clients?

We work with CoreHealth Technologies, our corporate wellness tracking software provider, who helps us to develop, deliver and administer our programs efficiently and affordably.

9. What information do you gather from a new employer interested in your wellness services?

We determine the number of employees in the organization, their organizational structure, and the current wellness activities they offer to their employees. Another important aspect is to try and get a feel for their corporate culture. A lot of the time you'll be able to gauge how interested and successful a company will be just based on how much their leadership and culture supports health and wellness.

10. What are some factors that have contributed to your success in offering wellness services?

We have continually changed and updated our programs to meet the needs of our clients. Keeping up with industry trends is essential so being flexible and listening to the needs of your customers is important.

Another success factor is our reputation in the local and business community. We have been in the wellness industry a long time and our reputation plays a large role in our success through long standing relationships and ongoing referrals.

In addition to our longevity and reputation, our successful coaching services also provide the biggest impact and generate the most positive feedback.

11. What's been the most challenging?

It is difficult to get information on *claims data* from insurers to help measure ROI. Currently, if the employer is self-insured it can be easier to access data if you know which metrics to pull. But when companies are fully insured, getting that information from the carrier is not as easy.

Another hurdle is providing *biometric screenings* nationally. Sometimes there are difficulties working with a third-party screener outside your region. Even national screening companies may not have adequate resources to reach all areas you need, and you have limited control over their service quality.

12. If you could offer any advice for health systems looking to expand into the corporate community what would it be?

We faced a learning curve when it came to determining how to bill for our wellness services. Our EMR system drives the billing for our health services, but this is not used for our separate wellness services – we must bill this separately and, in many cases, manually. Be prepared for the work that can be involved with this and try to develop an efficient process with your wellness and accounting teams to ensure billing runs smoothly.

13. Any other recommendations for the industry?

There are a lot of available resources for information on the wellness industry – such as WELCOA – but also accessing local resources is helpful too. We work with the Iowa Chronic Care Consortium which is an excellent resource too.

Also, it's imperative that you understand and know your market before offering wellness services. Your knowledge in this area will help determine the best type of services to offer.

MercyCare Case Study

Read the [MercyCare case study](#) to learn how they help local businesses achieve employee health.

Looking for More Helpful Resources?

Check out our [Resource Center](#) for more information to help health systems grow wellness revenue.