



CASE STUDY: Company Nurse's Injury Management Solution

Albuquerque Public Schools District

Nurse injury reporting and medical triage reduces workers' compensation claims and costs by 33%

As one of the largest school districts in the nation, Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) provides educational excellence and innovative academic programs to over 88,000 children attending 130 schools across the city. The district offers excellent employee benefits, including a safety and workers' compensation program, which covers approximately 15,000 employees.

The key objectives of the district's workers' compensation program are to help schools achieve safe work environments, and when injuries do occur, to promptly respond with a referral to quality medical care, and to assist employees in returning to work as soon as medically possible – all this while controlling program costs and outcomes.

In this case study, Lisa Gallegos, claims manager of APS, discusses the benefits of Company Nurse's injury management program. You'll learn how the APS district leveraged a nurse hotline to reduce its workers' compensation claims and costs by 33 percent.

THE SOLUTION: Company Nurse's Injury Management Program

Company Nurse has developed a nurse call center that provides injury management services to employers. Company Nurse began work with the APS district in 2006, providing their schools with two key services: 1) timely, accurate reporting of injuries and 2) nurse medical expertise to triage and refer injuries to the most appropriate level of care.

1. Timely, Accurate Reporting of Injuries

"We represent the 25th largest school district in the country," said Lisa Gallegos, APS claims manager. "We strive to implement cost-saving initiatives that stretch our district funds. Early on, we identified safety and injury management as areas to reduce expenses and simultaneously benefit our employees."

"In the past, however, injuries were not always reported on a timely basis, which affected overall costs and outcomes," said Gallegos. "Previously, employees were required to report injuries to their supervisors. In some cases, I received a medical bill for an injury, but the claim had not yet been filed. Employees said they had reported the injury to their supervisors, so our claims adjusters then had to track down claim forms and injury information."

With Company Nurse, the injury reporting process is now simple and standardized: an employee or supervisor calls the toll-free hotline to report an injury any time of day. Triage

nurses are trained to perform thorough questioning in order to gather comprehensive injury information. The nurse initiates all the paperwork, so a claim can be opened and managed.

Within minutes of an initial call, Company Nurse sends the report of injury to the school district's designated list of contacts. This immediate notification of stakeholders allows each party to initiate their role in the workers' compensation process, which helps to facilitate the best possible results.

2. Medical Triage & Referrals to the Best, Most Appropriate Level of Care

Under New Mexico workers' compensation law, the employer is allowed to select the healthcare provider who will provide care for the employee for the first 60 days of treatment. If care is still required after this 60-day period, the employee can choose a different provider, but is not required to do so.

"This mandate enables us to ensure employees obtain care from only the best, most quality providers in that first 60 days of treatment," said Gallegos. "Our injuries are typically not severe, but we needed to improve our medical referral process. In the past, if an employee was bleeding, even if it was a minor cut, they'd be sent to the emergency room. It wasn't an attempt to abuse the system. In most cases, staff members were simply trying to err on the side of caution. We believed Company Nurse could help us improve this medical referral process."

Company Nurse provides a nurse's medical expertise to ensure each injury receives the care appropriate to its level of medical severity. Using treatment protocols and sophisticated algorithms, the nurse systematically identifies the right course of treatment. With minor injuries, the nurse may provide simple first aid or self care guidelines over the phone.

After speaking with a nurse, many employees do not require or request additional medical services. In fact, 20 to 40 percent of all incoming calls result in "report only" or "first aid" injuries; this significantly reduces claims.

"If employees do require medical care, Company Nurse provides them with a referral number. Physicians in our preferred provider network are not authorized to treat employees without this referral number. If an employee arrives at a clinic without it, they're instructed to call Company Nurse from the facility in order to report the claim and obtain the referral number. This process of enforcement ensures our standard procedure is followed, and it's been the key to the success of our program."

LESSONS LEARNED:

Facilitating Program Adoption

To help facilitate program adoption, Company Nurse provided the district with promotional stickers and posters, which were posted at every school and served to educate and remind supervisors and employees about the new injury reporting process.

"We wanted to present the new program in a way that would allow employees to fully understand it and ask any questions," said Gallegos. "We held two educational sessions. We had district employees, supervisors, our TPA, and in-house claims adjusters attend. Company Nurse sent a representative, who addressed questions from the audience. By hosting informational meetings, employees could not claim that they 'didn't know' about the new injury-reporting process. We allowed everyone to ask questions until all their concerns were addressed."

THE RESULTS:***Enhanced Satisfaction with the Workers' Comp Program***

"This is the type of program every employer should have," said Gallegos. "In the first three months, we experienced immediate benefits and everyone has been happy with the results."

"Company Nurse certainly made my life easier," said Gallegos. "I manage property and casualty claims for our district, which includes workers' compensation. Before Company Nurse, I had to worry whether injuries were being properly reported and medically referred. At the start of each day, I never knew what to expect because there were no standard processes in place. With the new nurse-on-call program, we now have consistent procedures and methods of enforcement that have ensured outstanding results."

"In addition, our employees appreciate being able to speak with a nurse," said Gallegos. "It gives them a little peace of mind. In most cases, they've just experienced a worksite accident and suffered an injury. Being able to speak to a compassionate medical professional enables them to discuss what happened and relieve stress. Nurses ask employees to relay all the details; they listen carefully and respond to each person's unique needs. By discussing the incident right away, employees feel their trauma has been acknowledged and addressed."

Decreased Claims, Reduced Costs

"With Company Nurse's injury management program, we've reduced our claims and related costs by about one-third," said Gallegos. "Even our healthcare provider noticed a marked change in the number of medical referrals to their clinics. At first, they requested we modify their contract based on the lower volume, but in the end, they honored the agreement, recognizing the strength and value of our new injury management program."

"With the money we've saved, we've been proactive in making our work environment even safer. For example, we performed ergonomic evaluations for administrative staff. We strive for continual improvement and innovation, and Company Nurse has been an integral component to fostering positive changes in our program," said Gallegos.

About Company Nurse

The Company Nurse Injury Hotline enables organizations to make the "Right Call" for workplace injuries. As an independent facility, our triage nurses are compassionate and objective when assessing employee injuries and medical needs. Our injury-triage process is founded on three important elements for workers' compensation success: 1) Right Time, we respond on the Day of Injury, the earliest point at which to influence costs, outcomes, and employee satisfaction; 2) Right Care, our nurses refer employees to an appropriate level of care, whether ER, clinic or first aid; 3) Right Results, clients experience dramatic savings and a 200% return on investment.

For more information, go to www.companynurse.com or call (888) 817-9282.

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