

The Edmond Sun

October 29, 2013

City of Edmond employees will have access to health care clinic

James Coburn

The Edmond Sun

EDMOND — An Employee Health Care Clinic for the City of Edmond will be made available for the city's 700 employees sometime in early 2014.

Following a public workshop, the City Council voted 5-0 Monday evening to provide a city health care clinic to city staff and their dependents. The anticipated opening of the clinic will be in February or March, said Larry Stevens, city manager.

This year's budget has an initial allocation of \$800,000 to initiate the 900-square-foot clinic, Stevens said. Reserves in the Employee Group Health Fund will pay for the project. No out-of-pocket expenses will be associated with an office visit or the use of the basic generic medications available at the clinic, Stevens said.

"At the current time, our plan includes about 1,800 covered lives," Stevens said. The city will be charged \$22 a month per employee on the plan for the service.

The clinic will be located in the lower level of the Downtown Community Center, 28 E. Main St., at the current site of the Department of Public Safety. DPS requested to move to a larger space at the community center.

"We've been looking at this possibility internally from a staff perspective for the last couple of years," Stevens said.

Discussion of the wellness-oriented clinic has included the Employee Insurance Committee as well as health insurance consultants. The committee has visited with similar county and municipal clinics, including one that is already available for Oklahoma County workers.

"When we visited with those people, all of them felt their employee clinics were very popular not only to the employer, but for the employees as well," Stevens said.

In 2012, Oklahoma County Commissioner Ray Vaughn said the county clinic helped to drop the county's medical expenses by \$965,000 for Fiscal Year 2012. The City of Edmond also expects that its costs associated with health care will be reduced.

The city's health care program is self insured, said Lance Pendley, assistant vice president of McGriff, Seibels and Williams. Aetna Insurance administers the claims.

Pendley said normal medical increases have trended at 8-10 percent a year. It's not the sore throats and office visits that drive costs, but catastrophic health events that occur to a smaller patient population within a group, said Paul Keeling, chief business development officer with CareATC.

Seventy-four percent of the health care cost in the U.S. is attributable to chronic disease, according to the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention.

“We want to promote health, prevent disease and provide a shorter path to care,” Keeling said. “We do that by reducing the barriers to care. We want to come in, engage the employees and their families and change the health care culture.”

Participation by city employees will be voluntary, Stevens said. Some employees never visit a physician. The clinic will provide a close-to-work opportunity for health care screenings and a general health assessment.

“An additional emphasis on wellness not only focuses on healthier lifestyles but allows us to discover some significant health issues that some of our people might have that they don't know about,” Stevens said.

All federal patient privacy laws will be respected. Clinical records will be available only to the provider and not the city, Stevens said. Patients will be referred to specialists when needed. The clinical staff will include a physician and two medical assistants.

“One of the big advantages to this type of clinic is that there's minimal waiting time,” Stevens said.

[jacoburn@edmondsun.com](mailto:jcoburn@edmondsun.com) | 341-2121