

## Case study

# Making healthier happen one step at a time



Organization: **Sioux City Community School District**

Location: **Sioux City, Iowa**

Number of employees: **2,000**

Serves: **15,000+ students in 22 schools**



Photo courtesy of Sioux City Community School District

Better health choices. Better health outcomes. Lower costs. See how Sioux City Community School District's benefits strategy is built to drive healthy behaviors and lower costs.

### Situation

- Located in the tristate region of Iowa, South Dakota and Nebraska, the district needs to offer a benefits package that retains staff and stays competitive
- The district moved from a self-funded plan to a fully insured UnitedHealthcare plan in 2013 to help contain costs through programs that incentivize healthy behaviors and manage chronic conditions
- The district looks for staff to model the importance of staying healthy—physically and mentally—while supporting their students every day

### Action

- The district sought to take full advantage of programs included in their health insurance plan to help contain costs, including an activity-based incentive program that rewards healthy behaviors and programs to help manage chronic diseases
- Employees completed health surveys, biometric screenings, gym check-ins and virtual care appointments, receiving financial incentives and rewards
- The district used a wellness budget to provide even more opportunities for their staff to engage in wellness activities together

### Results

**\$161K+**

in SimplyEngaged® rewards earned by the district employees in one plan year

**70%+**

eligible district employees enrolled in the program<sup>1</sup>

**↓10.9%+**

risk-adjusted medical costs PMPM for program participants compared to nonparticipants

# Achieving better health while managing costs

As teachers and staff work hard every day serving over 15,000 students, Kim Smith and human resources work behind the scenes to ensure they feel supported by the Sioux City Community School District. And it all starts with a strategy to help the staff take full advantage of their UnitedHealthcare health insurance benefits, ranging from wellness to chronic disease management programs.

**“In order to fulfill our mission, our teachers and staff need to bring their best selves to work each day. Since partnering with UnitedHealthcare, the district has implemented initiatives to address their physical, mental and emotional well-being.”**

**Kim Smith**, Benefits & Insurance Manager, Sioux City Community School District

As the Benefits & Insurance Manager, Smith builds a culture of wellness through a variety of events and programs combined with strategic communications designed to engage all employees across the district on their terms. That approach has resulted in lower health care costs among engaged employees.

“Our wellness budget also helps make some of these programs and events even more impactful,” Smith says. “For instance, an on-site biometric event featured a wellness coach to discuss the results if needed. We’ve also extended flu shot clinics past school hours to allow more employees to attend.”

## Data and insights in action

Employee participation in SimplyEngaged, an activity-based incentive program, has grown to more than 70% since it began in 2013. Through the program, employees have received gift cards, including one plan year where more than \$161,000 in gift cards was awarded.

“The numbers we get back from programs like SimplyEngaged help us decide what to address for the upcoming plan year or longer term,” Smith says. “We know the healthier we can help keep our staff, we can keep our claims lower and lower the premiums that we have to pay in.”

For example, they held a diabetes management event that included free glucose monitors and cookbooks when data found some employees were at-risk for diabetes. They also implemented a program to help employees manage type 2 diabetes. Through these efforts, employees have reduced the amount of insulin they need or reversed a prediabetes diagnosis.

## Communicating opportunities is key

Frequent communications through different methods also keeps wellness front and center for the staff. A monthly newsletter, *Health Connection*, shares the value of programs like SimplyEngaged and how to participate.

“With strong support from the superintendent and leadership, Kim has provided something for everyone—so someone who’s not interested in a contest may want to learn about a

↓ **14.5%**

risk-adjusted medical costs PMPM for SimplyEngaged highly engaged participants compared to nonparticipants<sup>2</sup>

mental health topic through a book challenge,” says Dr. Jen Gomez, Director of Human Resources, Sioux City Community School District.

In response to the pandemic, Smith increased communication about available behavioral health benefits and started “De-stress Challenge” month, which included mental health journals. Fliers and window clings also promoted behavioral health services embedded in the UnitedHealthcare medical benefit, including access to an Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

“We know our food service staff and bus drivers have difficulty accessing their emails so we’ll ask secretaries for help to distribute information,” Smith says. “We use our call and texting systems to remind all employees about open enrollment.”

Throughout the year, employees can participate in programs ranging from challenges to encourage more walking during the day to a chance to win prizes for getting preventive care.

Learn more about the Sioux City Community School District at [siouxcityschools.org](https://siouxcityschools.org)



This case study is true. Savings calculated on book-of-business case rate savings for these programs. Savings for enrolled members are case specific.

Results will vary based on client specific demographics and plan design. Results will vary depending on the state where the insured policy is issued and the amount of engagement by employees.

<sup>1</sup> Count represented by unique subscribers and spouses completing at least one SimplyEngaged action during the plan year.

<sup>2</sup> Highly engaged participants completed Rally Survey, a Biometric Screening and 3 Rally Missions or a Wellness Coaching Program.

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