

# Vigo Schools Offer Free Healthcare Option

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A normal trip to the doctor involves a co-pay of some form. If you receive a prescription or two for medication, that's more money to spend. The Wellness For Life center eliminates those costs and still provides the same healthcare for employees that their primary physicians do.

54 months ago, Vigo County schools developed the Wellness For Life center to offer employees and their dependents an alternative healthcare option at no cost.



"It's zero cost for the employee and their covered dependents, spouse, children, to go to the clinic," Caleb Whitmer said, an account manager with R.E. Sutton & Associates, the consulting firm for the school corporation's insurance benefits.

The free services have saved the employee and their dependent a great deal of money as well. Since the center opened nearly 54 months ago, employees have saved just south of \$1 million in office visit fees. When it comes to medication costs, that number is \$400,000. A win-win for

both parties while getting great healthcare.

"The employee who before didn't have the money to go to the doctor and then would have to take off work now goes to the doctor," Superintendent Danny Tanoos said. "The employee who didn't have enough money to get medication now gets their medication, gets well quicker and gets back to work."

The center is just like any other doctor's office you'll see. It's ran by Dr. Kayur Patel, his physician assistant, Ken Massey, and others. They are easily accessible whenever needed.



"The hours of operation are just on the board. The doors are open," Dr. Patel said. "They call us for <http://www.mywabashvalley.com/story/d/story/vigo-schools-offer-free-healthcare-option/12657/BitimhOs1UamCH3cln36bQ>

things. We see them for things at various off hours."

Superintendent Tanoos says nearly 80 percent of the employees and their dependents utilize the center. Some of which never had physicians or doctors.

"A significant number of those individuals see us 2 or 3 times a year and they really call this place home now," Dr. Patel added. "I think that's the crowd that we were able to impact the most."

Dr. Patel says the employee can visit the center the same day the call for an appointment is made. The testimonies heard from employees tell Dr. Patel and Superintendent Tanoos that their services are working.

"When 2 or 3 patients come back and tell you that without you guys, I wouldn't have quit smoking or without you guys, I wouldn't have lost X amount of weight, that's powerful," Dr. Patel explained.

"They talk about getting in their right away, getting their assessment, and in several cases, heart issues and other issues that needed immediate attention,"

The employees and their dependents are still free to see their primary physician. The Wellness For Life center isn't mandatory for them. It's simply a way to provide a free alternative and save the employee money.

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