

NASPE Communications Award Submission

March 2009

Submission Title: Health Benefits: Nurse Advice Line Postcard
Submission Category: Print
State: Ohio
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1. Please provide a brief description of the submission.

The Communications and Health Benefits teams developed a postcard for the Department of Human Resource Office, Benefits Administration on an under-utilized program, the Nurse Advice Line. The state has experienced above-normal utilization of the Emergency Room benefit, and we identified that our workforce was not using a benefit that could help them seek more effective treatment sources for minor illness and ailments. This postcard was created to encourage use of the Nurse Advice Line for members making health care decisions.

The design of the postcard included a laminated magnet with the Nurse Line contact information available 24/7 to our insured employees. This magnet was specifically designed to create a longer shelf life of the piece and to bring comfort identifying the contact information for family members in time of need.

The postcard was monitored and the results were astonishing. We immediately increased our use of the Nurse Advice Line, and this saved the state thousands of dollars as a direct result of consultative Nurse Advice and decreased non-emergency use of the Emergency Room and Urgent Care. Some results are: increase of 574% in calls. An initial spike of 351 calls the first week it hit employee homes resulted in an initial savings of more than \$17,000 in avoided ER visits.

2. How long has the submission been in existence?

The Nurse Advice Line was created in October of 2008 and delivered to employees' homes the week of November 7th.

3. Why was the submission created?

The Benefits Administration team reviewed our employees' habits and noticed higher-than-normal Emergency Room costs. The Urgent Care Visits were also stagnating, and we identified that many of the visits could have been avoided, or a visit to their primary care physician may have better served our employee. The Nurse Advice Line immediately came up as a potential means for lowering these avoidable costs.

The next step was to create a communication that could stay top of mind to our employees during times of need as well as engage them in utilizing the service as a part of their decision making when choosing a health care resource. We contacted our Nurse Advice Line partners and asked them to report on nurse line utilization so we could measure program results and effectiveness of the marketing program. We were able to gauge the success by the results provided from our Nurse Advice Line partners, and we are actively promoting and supporting this program in order to change the culture when it comes to making decisions about health care.

4. How does this submission support the goals and objectives of your agenda/department?

One of the state's goals for the employee benefits program is the effective use of health care benefits. The state's objective is to provide employees with information that helps them wisely choose health care resources that are appropriate for maintaining good health. The Nurse Advice Line postcard and magnet help our members use benefits when needed and avoid unnecessary health care costs.

5. Have you been able to measure the effectiveness of the submission? If so, how?

We were able to measure the effectiveness of the magnet postcard by actively working with the Nurse Advice Line partners in capturing participation rates. In the month the Magnet Postcard was received in homes, nurse line use increased by an astounding 574%. Savings from avoided emergency room and urgent care visits were \$17,004 for the month. These savings were a direct connection to the launch of the Magnet Postcard campaign.