

# News release

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## ***Employer survey finds worksite health centers remain a key well-being strategy despite disruption caused by COVID-19***

**NEW YORK, October 26, 2021, 9:00 AM EDT** – Employer-sponsored health centers (both in-person at the worksite and virtual) continue to be a key health and benefits strategy despite the pandemic forcing employees to stay home and defer in-person care. According to [Mercer’s 2021 Worksite Health Center Report](#), conducted in collaboration with the [National Association of Worksite Health Centers](#) (NAWHC), a non-profit trade association for employers who sponsor worksite health centers, nearly one-third (31%) of respondents (US organizations with at least 5,000 employees) offer primary care health centers, up from 20% in 2010. The pandemic has not caused health center sponsors to retrench this popular benefit to any significant degree; only 1% of respondents say they will decrease the number of health center locations as a result of the pandemic.

Most health centers surveyed now provide telehealth services by clinic staff (78%), up from just 21% in 2018. Notably, better access to care is the highest rated objective; nearly all respondents (98%) rated it as an important objective. And, as the range of services offered at health centers continues to expand, more employers are allowing members to select their health center as their primary care provider -- 71 % of respondents compared to 49% in 2015.

“When a company prioritizes taking care of its employees, everything else falls into place,” said David Keyt, Worksite Health Consulting Group Leader. “Employers can show support by offering a holistic approach to well-being and a gold standard for supporting employee health is access to onsite or near-site health centers. These findings show that rather than cutting back on this popular benefit during the pandemic, employers are instead embracing it as the foundation of their health, safety, and well-being strategy.”

Some sponsors used their health center to assist in their response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many centers offered diagnostic testing (66%) and some (25%) offered antibody testing; 39% administered daily COVID screening questionnaires and 18% conducted contact tracing. Over two-fifths (42%) administered COVID-19 vaccines. These numbers are expected to increase because of Biden’s latest COVID-19 action plan that states all employers with 100 or more employees must require onsite workers to be vaccinated or undergo at least weekly COVID-19 testing.

Key considerations for employers that provide health centers or plan to provide health centers in the future include:

- Leverage the telehealth and digital channels that a health center offers. Models are no longer restricted by the four walls of the physical health center.
- Health center primary care models should be fully integrated with the community healthcare ecosystem.

- Employers should consider offering ancillary services because they offer a cost-neutral path to core primary care engagement, which drives return on investment.

“A worksite health center, whether it’s onsite, near-site, shared, mobile or virtual, can be the hub of all of an employer’s benefit and wellness programs, increasing engagement and integrating care to more fully support the health of employees and their family members,” said Larry Boress, executive director of NAWHC. “Access to convenient and quality care is a critical strategy to improve health and productivity for organizations given the workforce disruptions over the last 18 months and growing challenges to hire and retain workers.”

### **About the Survey of Worksite Health Centers**

With the help of the NAWHC, Mercer worked with clinic management companies to distribute the survey to employers for whom they provide services and recruited additional clinic sponsors as well. The survey was fielded from March-April 2021 and 142 employers with clinics provided information. The full report is available [here](#).

### **About National Association of Worksite Centers**

The National Association of Worksite Health Centers (NAWHC) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization for employers, unions, vendors, consultants, health providers and others interested in developing and expanding the capabilities of onsite, near-site, mobile and virtual health centers, pharmacies and wellness centers. NAWHC serves as a clearinghouse of information on worksite health centers and the marketplace, providing educational programs, resources, benchmarking surveys, and employer case studies. For more information, visit [nawhc.org](http://nawhc.org).

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