



Health screening company goes beyond traditional biometrics

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After losing two colleagues in a short period of time (one in a car accident caused by an undetermined medical issue and one from a heart attack) Joe Mina, a captain in the criminal investigations division with the Harford County Sheriff's Office in Bel Air, Md., increased his efforts to implement a more comprehensive health screening program for employees.

Mina also serves as the organization's wellness coordinator. The Harford County Sheriff's Office employs about 570 people, including law enforcement, corrections and civilian personnel.

While the Sheriff's Office had offered a heart-lung scan through the University of Maryland about six or seven years ago, Mina was looking for something more local, believing that the 45-minute commute to Baltimore discouraged some employees from participating in the screening. "The ones who were serious about their health, they went," he recalls. "The ones who [felt] it was kind of up in the air — they didn't go."

He partnered with Life Line Screening, a company that conducts comprehensive screening and diagnostic testing to employer and community groups, to offer employees a set of cardiovascular screenings, which included screenings for stroke/carotid artery disease, peripheral arterial disease, abdominal aortic aneurysm and atrial fibrillation. Employees were also given the option of personalizing their tests even further, based on their concerns or health risks. The screening was set up at a local fire hall, which made the program easily accessible for employees.

"What happens when you go to a doctor's office? They do your blood pressure. They do your cholesterol screening. They might measure your body mass index. Those are all risk factors for potentially developing cardiovascular disease, but it's not the detection of the disease itself," explains Chris Smith, executive vice president, business development with Life Line Screening of the company's approach to screening, which goes beyond traditional biometric screening for risk factors.

Employers can choose from a menu of up to 20 different screenings. In addition to finger-stick blood screenings to detect risk factors such as elevated cholesterol and blood sugar levels, Life Line Screening uses ultrasound screenings and limited electrocardiographs, or EKGs. The company provides vouchers to the employer to give to employees, who then redeem the vouchers at the time of the screening. Employers are then billed as the vouchers are used. "Generally, we see about a 30% utilization rate," says Smith.

“It was relatively cheap for the number of people we were able to get through. I know that to get these tests that they did run, you actually have to have your doctor prescribe these tests,” says Mina. “This means you go to your doctor and he finds something wrong. These tests aren't something that you can just walk in and say, ‘hey, can you do this test?’”

Employees are provided with their individual results and employers receive an aggregate report. “The report that we got was helpful for us because it gave us a gauge of the population within the agency — whether they were men or women, were overweight, or a group that had some diabetes issues,” says Mina. “From that report we're kind of looking at what is the next step, what we do next.”