



Off-Cycle Implementation Provides the Shortest Path to Benefits Administration Success for Saint Barnabas Health Care System



“Open enrollment is one of the busiest times of the year. By implementing off-cycle we were able to assist employees in making more cost-effective benefits elections and improve costs for employees and our organization.”

PATRICK DONAHUE
VP OF BENEFITS

SAINT BARNABAS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Saint Barnabas Health Care System implements a new off-cycle outsourced benefits administration solution and delivers new tools and services while ensuring a smooth rollout of new benefits offerings to employees.

Saint Barnabas Health Care System is New Jersey's largest integrated health care delivery system and the second largest private employer in the state. It includes seven hospitals and New Jersey's only certified burn treatment facility. The system also includes the Saint Barnabas Outpatient Centers, eight nursing and rehabilitation centers and one assisted-living facility, ambulatory care facilities, geriatric centers, a statewide behavioral health network and comprehensive home care and hospice programs. Throughout the system, dedicated physicians, nurses and health professionals are committed to providing the highest quality of patient care and health education to the community and the region.

Focused on Providing a Better Experience for Employees

Delivering quality care is essential to the employees at Saint Barnabas Health Care System. Providing the best possible service to customers is the cornerstone of the organization's culture, as well as a key differentiator. Employees are encouraged to find new ways to improve their patients' experiences, and as an extension of this mission, the HR team focuses on enhancing the services provided to employees. In support of that mission, the HR team launched an effort to find a new outsourced benefits administration partner that could alleviate transactional burdens, provide an intuitive enrollment experience and deliver 24/7 support for its 24/7 workforce.

With 15,000 eligible employees, and healthcare costs outpacing inflation, Saint Barnabas needed a benefits administration solution that could help contain employee benefits expense. New consumer-directed health plans had been designed for the upcoming plan year, and the HR team saw an opportunity to help employees make more informed and cost-effective elections.

Additionally, the HR team at Saint Barnabas felt that the enrollment experience for employees and administrators could be improved with easy-to-use Web-based tools. As an organization with complex benefits requirements, Saint Barnabas wanted to outsource to a company that would become a partner and provide a solution that met their unique business needs.

Traditionally, most organizations make changes to their benefits administration around annual enrollment. Saint Barnabas elected to make this change during their off-cycle period to avoid the open enrollment rush.

"We were looking for a partner to improve our benefits administration and increase employee satisfaction with the enrollment experience," said Patrick Donahue, vice president of Benefits, Saint Barnabas Health Care System. "We chose to do this off-cycle to ensure our internal staff would have time and resources to handle the transition of this high-volume event. We knew we needed flawless execution if we were going to provide a meaningful experience for employees."

Off-Cycle Implementation Makes for a Smooth Process

To accomplish the objectives of enhancing the benefits administration experience, reducing costs and providing employees with decision-support tools to help them make better decisions, Saint Barnabas partnered with Workscope. Workscope's proven outsourced benefits administration solution offers Web-based, self-service applications and integrated services such as a full-service employee communications group and a 24x7 onshore HR Service Center to engage employees in a highly interactive benefits experience that produces positive outcomes.

"When we partnered with Workscope, we gained improved costs, better customer service, better quality and dramatically improved Web tools," said Donahue. "An off-cycle approach allowed us to make changes to the way we handled benefits administration without adding work to our staff during open enrollment."

Saint Barnabas also had adequate time to focus on source systems and ensure good quality data. Transitions – even under the best of circumstances – are difficult. When the data is good, everything is likely to go better. Throughout the transition, Workscope and Saint Barnabas teams worked closely together to ensure a successful partnership.

"Workscope has a sophisticated project management program to help everyone understand what is involved and the level of commitment required for success," said Donahue. "All change is challenging, but how it's managed can make for a more successful implementation. They took the time to understand our business and our business needs."

Improved Web Tools and Employee Services Provide a Healthier Enrollment Experience

Outsourcing to Workscope helped the Saint Barnabas HR team fulfill its mission of delivering exceptional service to employees. Employees were able to take advantage of services prior to open enrollment and seek assistance 24/7 from the service center at their convenience.

In addition to live support, Workscope also delivers interactive health benefit modeling tools via Saint Barnabas' internal intranet site. Utilizing these tools, employees are able to gain deeper understanding of their benefits options and make appropriate, cost-effective enrollment choices.

Administrative access to data has also dramatically improved. With access to the HR Service Center tracking system, HR staff can see what issues are generating calls and proactively communicate with employees. The organization can also gain visibility into participation levels for the online enrollment system and the decision support tools. This has generated actionable information for the HR team. For example, the data showed that employees who used decision support tools were less likely to waive coverage, and more likely to contribute to an FSA. In addition, decision support users contributed greater amounts to their FSA than employees who contributed to an FSA without using decision support. This information enables Saint Barnabas to make changes and take a more productive role in driving desired employee behaviors.

"The results were better than expected – and we expected good results. Through robust analytics, we learned how online tools affected plan enrollment and where we should focus our efforts moving forward. The 24/7 HR Service Center and Web-based modeling tools help our employees better understand their choices, said Donahue. Employees who used the modeling tools were more likely to elect coverage because they understood the value of their benefits. Workscope is a partner that works as an extension of our HR team, enabling us to provide a high-value enrollment experience."