

# Direct-to-Employer Services: How To Engage in Employer Outreach



Interested in providing direct-to-employer services but don't know where to start? APTA can help you reach out to employers.

Today's employer is facing a daunting challenge: find a creative, evidence-based solution to the explosive and unrelenting growth of health care spending.

Physical therapists and physical therapist assistants — with their training, knowledge, and proven ability to deliver cost-effective evidence-based services — are ideally positioned to help employers lower health care costs, lessen the impact of pain and opioids, and keep their people healthy, happy, strong, and productive.

There are plenty of good reasons for PTs to work directly with employers or employer groups in addition to managing individual patients and clients. PTs are positioned to promote the development, evaluation, and implementation of high-value management that can serve more people at lower per-capita costs than existing disease-management models — with the potential to decrease employers' health care costs without compromising quality.

(For more explanation of all the reasons to pursue direct-to-employer services, read our perspective paper "Direct-to-Employer Services: Why PTs Should Work With Employers to Manage Population Health.")

Here are some things to consider as you map out strategies for approaching and working with employers.

## Providing Employer Interventions

Designing an employer-focused program involves collaboration. You and the employer will work together to define and analyze their challenges:

- Define the top risks contributing to rising health care costs and employee loss of productivity.
- Use industry data or objective information shared by the employer to guide the solution.
- Identify baseline data, such as current health care spending, for key diagnostic groups to define the scope of the problem.
- Engage with the payer to mine the proper data showing the level of spending for targeted diagnostic categories.

You'll identify target areas and customize program goals, which may include:

- Containing or even lowering health care costs and premiums.
- Improving employee satisfaction.
- Decreasing employees' absenteeism — days off from work.
- Improving employees' presenteeism — their productivity while at work.
- Decreasing risk of an employee's health issue progressing to a legal claim.

You'll help the employer customize programs to meet the needs of the specific employee population, such as:

- Routing all nonemergent musculoskeletal conditions through a physical therapist first, which significantly reduces unnecessary imaging, physician visits, pharmacy, and time away from work.

- Reevaluating the overall health care cost impact after 12 months, comparing those seeking a physical therapist first with those obtaining care through traditional pathways.
- Assessing employee satisfaction along with return-to-work statistics to verify that the cost savings are also providing enhanced outcomes.
- Implementing programs to improve fitness of pregnant employees to decrease complications following labor.
- Providing the professionals who possess the required skills to successfully implement the program.
- In collaboration with the employer you can lead a team of health care providers in accordance with research-based guidelines to streamline processes, decrease costs, and improve your employee outcomes, and provide ongoing program assessment and reporting with continuous quality improvement.

Depending on the number and geographic spread of employees, the location of the business, and the cultural diversity of the population, a single-site therapy clinic might not be adequate. In that case, consider partnering with other practices in the area to ensure that you can meet the needs of the employer and employees in terms of distance, cultural diversity, and specialty services. Seek out existing physical therapy networks to work in a collaborative partnership to cover the geographic needs of the employer.

## Learning More About Current Health Care Trends and What Is Important to Employers

Understanding the employer perspective requires ongoing study, observation of what they perceive as important, and identifying how you can be part of the solution. Following are thought leaders in the employer health care space that offer free webinars, insightful reports, and updates you can sign up for.

**[Business Group on Health.](#)** Membership includes 74 Fortune 100 companies that provide health coverage for 60 million workers, their families, and retirees in over 200 countries. APTA is a member. Members come together to leverage thought leadership and best practice.

**[National Alliance of Health Care Purchaser Coalitions.](#)** The National Alliance comprises nonprofit state, local, and regional business coalitions dedicated to driving health and health care value. These member coalitions represent more than 12,000 purchasers and employers, and 45 million Americans.

**[National Council of Self-insurers.](#)** NCSI is an organization of corporate, state association, and professional members representing about 3,500 employers, advocating for the workers' compensation system and self-insurance of workers' compensation liability.

**[Workers' Compensation Research Institute.](#)** WCRI is an independent, not-for-profit research organization that strives to make improvements to the workers' compensation system by providing objective data and analysis.

## Engaging Employers at the National and Local Levels

**Reach out.** First, research the company you're interested in. Next approach the human resource executive. Share your interest in learning more about the company and particularly its challenges with musculoskeletal injuries. Larger companies may employ a risk manager who might have insight on the employer's needs for injury prevention and medical plan design.

**Consider existing contacts.** If your clinic provides occupational health services for a local business, reach out to them to expand services into wellness and non-work-related musculoskeletal injuries and conditions.

**Partner.** If a local primary care or orthopedic physician group is working with an employer, gather your data and develop a plan to demonstrate why partnering with you for therapy services would improve patient outcomes and lower the total cost of care.

**Consider unions.** Large unions often are self-insured and are motivated to reduce injury and prevent costly medical care for their members. They may be open to more creative plans that would allow for earlier access to physical therapy in exchange for lower cost-sharing by their members.

**Consider school districts.** Like unions, many school districts are self-insured and motivated to reduce injury. What's more, they have a vested interest in the community and in developing local relationships.

**Join a group.** As either an individual practice owner or part of a group, join a civic organization or regional, state, or city business coalition. Start by checking out the National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions. <https://www.nationalalliancehealth.org/about/coalition-members>

**Volunteer.** Volunteer for participation on committees and projects. This give you an opportunity to educate and demonstrate your unique rehab perspective and its importance to the employer community.

**Submit presentations.** Consider presenting at employer group meetings, safety meetings, conferences, and webinars, such as for the Business Group on Health and the National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions.

**Submit articles.** Write articles or report on studies of interest to the human resource executives and employer community that highlight the value of physical therapy. Offer to discuss the relevance of the study in addressing employer needs.

**Attend employer events.** Even if you don't make a presentation, attend local conferences, forums, and summits. There you can network and gather firsthand knowledge on what is important to employers, including what they see as pain points that physical therapist services could address.

**Attend local workers' compensation events.** These meetings welcome providers along with payers, claims managers, and third-party administrators. Networking opportunities can open doors to collaborative relationships.

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