

ReadyOne medical clinic: Workers praise on-site health care

By Diana Washington Valdez / El Paso Times

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Nurse practitioner Robert Martinez examined Antonia Adame at the ReadyOne Industries clinic Thursday. The clinic provides on-site medical care to the garment manufacturer's 1,150 employees. (Victor Calzada / El Paso Times)

EL PASO -- Nieves Jacquez likes to rave about the clinic at ReadyOne Industries, where he has worked for the past 18 months.

The sewing machine operator said he's used the Care Here clinic several times with satisfactory results. The best part is he doesn't have to leave work to get medical attention.

"The staff at the clinic is great. I don't have a lot of (financial) resources, so this benefit is very important to me," Jacquez said. "I would like to see it continue."

Under the leadership of board Chairman Tripper Goodman, the company opened the clinic last October as an enhanced benefit for employees.

A year later, Tom Ahmann, president and CEO of ReadyOne Industries, said it has become popular with all employees, including managers.

"It's been so successful we're going to continue it," Ahmann said. "It's a terrific benefit. It's one of these things that's needed in our community. It is also convenient for our work force, some who have severe disabilities."

ReadyOne Industries employs 1,150 people, and about 75 percent of its direct labor force includes people who are blind or severely disabled.

The clinic services are free to employees, who also receive health-care insurance. During the early part of the day, the clinic sees employees with appointments, and in the afternoons, it accepts walk-ins.

The medical staff includes a physician's assistant who can write medication prescriptions and two nurses, as well as a doctor who is on call.

Robert Martinez, a Care Here nurse practitioner, has been with the clinic since it opened.

"The employees love it," he said. "It's a primary care facility, so they get most of their health-care needs taken care of."

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Care Here, out of Austin, specializes in on-site health care, and it operates 60 clinics nationwide.

"The employees receive free generic medications. They simply go to the pharmacy at Sam's and get their prescriptions filled," Ahmann said.

Leticia Jimenez, the company's human resources director, said the clinic benefit appealed to job applicants.

"In this day and age of employers cutting back on health-care benefits, the clinic is an attractive benefit to (prospective) employees," she said.

ReadyOne officials declined to disclose what it costs the company to provide the clinic.

"It saves on health insurance costs because as a primary care clinic, it can help prevent more-serious diseases by catching them earlier," Jimenez said. "For example, the clinic does Pap smears; this is an important health prevention screening."

ReadyOne Industries executives said that other companies in the area have sent representatives to see the clinic and that visitors have praised its ability to see patients right away.

"Employees don't lose a workday and get to see a doctor right away," Ahmann said.

Soon, the clinic will also provide basic X-ray services.

Nearly 40 years ago, Farah Manufacturing boasted a company clinic at its former plant off Gateway West that served more than 7,000 employees.

According to news archives, in 1970 the Farah clinic provided "the most comprehensive industrial medicine program ever instituted in the Southwest."

Many maquiladoras in Juárez also provide health-care facilities for employees at their plants.

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