



## Working Together for Health

*“Working with PartnerSHIP 4 Health has enhanced our ability to address obesity. The resource and expertise sharing by PartnerSHIP 4 Health has positively impacted our health care facility as well as our community.”*

Beth Ulschmid  
Director of Clinic Operations  
Perham Health

Strategy: Healthcare



Changing eating and exercise habits to become healthier is not an easy task. Sanford Health Clinics in Perham, New York Mills, and Ottertail City now offer their Medicare patients an opportunity to work together with their health care provider to make changes towards a healthier lifestyle. This new benefit is free to any Medicare patient with a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 30 or more.

The patient meets with either their provider or a registered dietitian for up to 22 visits in a 12-month period. Patients receive the confidence and the skills to make gradual and lasting lifestyle changes that promote healthy weight loss, improved blood pressure, lower cholesterol levels, better diabetes control, and more.

Visits are 15 minutes in duration, but occur frequently. Weekly scheduled visits occur during the first month followed by visits every other week thru month six. If the patient’s weight has decreased by at least 6.6 pounds, monthly visits continue thru month twelve.

Beth Ulschmid, the Director of Clinic Operations at Perham Health Clinics in Perham, New York Mills, and Ottertail City, clinics managed by Sanford Health, learned via meetings with *PartnerSHIP 4 Health* about this wonderful benefit. Ulschmid connected with Fargo-Moorhead and Detroit Lakes Sanford Health to determine lessons learned from their rollout of this benefit.

Ulschmid then collaborated with Perham Health Departments of Marketing, Information Technology (IT), and Coding and Billing staff to create codes and workflow to support this Medicare benefit.

In April of 2014, a Perham Health Clinic team consisting of Ulschmid, registration staff, a nurse, a coder, a dietitian and the Fargo Sanford Health nutrition manager met to create, review and finalize the steps needed to offer this benefit.

The new benefit rolled-out to patients on April 15, 2014, and by mid-June, dietitian services increased to accommodate the number of obesity-related referrals. Perham Health dietitians were meeting with patients from 30-60 minutes, noting that it was difficult to fit the visit into the fifteen-minute timeframe reimbursed by Medicare.

*PartnerSHIP 4 Health* again shared some resources developed by other healthcare professionals regarding effectively and efficiently delivering this benefit within a 15-minute timeframe.

According to registered dietitian Gwen Horter, “Several Medicare patients have additional issues such as diabetes and they have seen great improvement in their diabetic control since starting this program. Others have noted that the program allows them access to education and support that they could not previously afford. I am happy to report that all of my patients have lost weight!”

