

Vandy nursing school wins contract for on-site clinics

Growing venture offsets costs from area indigent-care clinics

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Vanderbilt's indigent-care clinics will finish this year with a \$1 million deficit.

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[Vanderbilt University School of Nursing's](#) employer health clinic business got a shot in the arm recently with the signing of its largest-ever contract and a licensing agreement to take the model national.

The Clarksville-Montgomery School System and county government will get six on-site clinics in 2007 through the contract, which covers about 6,300 employees and dependents. At similar sites, Vanderbilt's clinic model has produced annual savings in the six figures.

Bonnie Pilon, senior associate dean of faculty practice at VUSN, says the Clarksville deal - and others with companies and school systems - are helping offset the high cost of the school's indigent care clinics, which will finish this year with a \$1 million deficit.

"We'll probably reduce that some, but not break even," says Pilon. "We're trying to diversify our business to take care of the poor and underserved."

Additional revenue will come Pilon's way through a licensing agreement with an Arizona company, [Clinical Resources Group](#). CRG is licensing VUSN's policies and protocols to replicate the clinic model across the nation. Susan Davison of CRG says its first clinic will open in May.

Pilon and Davison won't put a value on the employer health contracts or licensing agreement.

Vanderbilt's five indigent-care clinics around Nashville operate mainly in HUD-subsidized residential complexes to make care accessible for residents, says Caroline Portis-Jenkins, clinical director for employer health clinics at the school. They are staffed by nurse practitioners and provide basic primary care.

Davison says CRG was interested in the program because it's proven to be an effective way to implement the cost-saving clinic model that employers across the country are increasingly demanding.

Sherman Cline, business manager at Dickson County schools, says the on-site clinics he opened through VUSN last year cut teacher absenteeism and the need for hiring substitutes as well as the system's workers' compensation bill.

"We saved roughly \$250,000 to \$300,000 on office visits and a similar amount from encouraging employees to go from name brand to generics," says Cline.

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