

Eliminating paper and improving organizational efficiency

First Choice Home Health and Hospice drives exponentially higher productivity, cuts hospital readmissions and realizes solid cost reductions

First Choice Home Health and Hospice started out with the modest goals of eliminating paper and improving the efficiency of its organization. But a transformative change took place that brought significant improvements in patient care, streamlined daily operations and delivered a dramatic reduction in its operational expenses—all made possible through Netsmart Homecare.

Experience

First Choice Home Health and Hospice was clear about its need for a fully electronic Homecare and Hospice solution. “We had a significant amount of staff in the back office constantly busy filing charts and performing data entry,” stated Beau Sorensen, Chief Financial Officer for First Choice Home Health and Hospice. “This was a huge waste of resources, making our initial motivation to go electronic primarily a cost savings issue.”

The organization knew what it wanted from a homecare solution. “We wanted an innovator—someone who would always push forward,” said Sorensen. “We performed an evaluation and knew that Netsmart was offering new mobility technology as well as a full-electronic health record. We wanted to be as paperless as we could, and we felt that Netsmart could help us get that entire patient record out in the field electronically.”

“Between eliminating paper charting and reducing unnecessary travel, we’re also seeing a 17 percent increase in clinician productivity. That increased productivity is directed entirely to revenue generating activity.”

Beau Sorensen, Chief Financial Officer
First Choice Home Health and Hospice



At a glance

Community

- Home Health and Hospice

Location

- Orem, UT

Challenges

- Documentation was still on paper
- Improve efficiency of organization

Solution

- Netsmart AllDocs
- Netsmart Homecare™

Results

- Hospital readmission rates cut from 38% to 14-16%
- Patient admission time cut from 3-4 hours to less than one hour
- Claims denials slashed to near zero
- Clinician travel time cut approximately 70%
- Increased clinical productivity 17% by eliminating paper

Solutions

Netsmart delivered a solution targeted specifically to the needs of homecare and hospice providers. The technology's ease-of-use and robust functionality won over skeptical new users. "We initially had some staff that were not computer savvy," said Sorensen. "But after using this intuitive system, they have come to appreciate the benefits of Netsmart. It makes their lives easier because they feel like they can access all patient information from one source."

Netsmart AllDocs was used to help drive the organization to a fully electronic environment, including pre-existing paper charts. All old paper records were scanned into the system through AllDocs and attached to the patient record. AllDocs proved a strong benefit to both the HR and Accounting departments of First Choice Home Health and Hospice as a way to streamline documentation. Beau Sorensen also uses the technology to prepare educational materials for his staff. "When we attend a conference, we load the audio files from the event into AllDocs," he said. "All information is available to staff that want to continue their education, and they can access it right from home."

Stellar care

Netsmart Homecare enabled the entire First Choice Home Health and Hospice team to communicate more effectively, raising the level of care for patients. "Out in the field, our clinicians can know what's going on with a patient, whether it's their visit, a visit from the Aide earlier in the day or the PT's visit last week," said Sorensen. "They have the information they need to make good decisions in the field, and with the mobile application they can document vitals, current treatments and status for the next clinician."

The combination of multi-disciplinary care functionality and predictive modeling is raising the quality of patient care. "We have noticed a significant difference in our patients' outcomes," said Sorensen. "We're using predictive modeling to identify outpatients with a diagnosis that makes them a candidate for hospital readmission. We focus on conditions that hospitals get penalized on, such as AMI, pneumonia and heart failure.

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Once these patients are identified, we use Netsmart integration to telehealth to enable case managers to know immediately when patient measurements are performed. Prior to Netsmart Homecare, our readmission rate was 38 percent; now it has dropped to 14-16 percent." Hospital referrals for First Choice Home Health and Hospice are also up over 500 percent due in large part to the reduction in rehospitalization made possible with Netsmart Homecare.

Redefining productivity

The gains in productivity from customized assessments made possible through Netsmart Homecare were dramatic and immediate. Admit time has been cut from 3 to 4 hours to under one hour.

"We've also used the assessments, as well as audits that show the number of authorized visits, to reduce our denials significantly," said Sorensen. "The result is that we have a much cleaner chart. Additional requests for documentation are now perfunctory, whereas before we needed to do a major audit to ensure that our coding was accurate." The result is a drop in First Choice Home Health and Hospice's denial rate from approximately 92 percent to near zero. At its height, A/R was over 90 days outstanding for the organization. After implementing Netsmart Homecare, A/R is now at 45 days.

"With the scheduling component, we enter the care criteria, and the system shows us the clinicians best suited for a job," says Sorensen. "We no longer have to sift through reams of HR data; the answer is right at our fingertips. With the mobile capabilities, we also no longer have to guess about a clinician's current location."

Meeting the unique demands of homecare/hospice

Netsmart Homecare keeps First Choice Home Health and Hospice ahead of the curve when its regulatory environment changes. “One of the nice things about Netsmart is that regulatory requirements are constantly updated; you are going to get what you need when you need it,” said Sorensen. “I remember that when PPS came into effect, there were homecare organizations that went out of business because they were not ready for it. Netsmart has always been on point with updates that allow us to continue to bill and not run into cash flow issues.”

Netsmart Homecare also includes bereavement functionality that sets reminders of upcoming events and can automatically generate sympathy materials to go out to the client’s family.

Dramatically lower costs

Netsmart mobile application enables clinicians to accurately track mileage for purposes of reimbursement. Clinician travel to and from First Choice Home Health and Hospice has dropped approximately 70 percent, as clinical workers no longer need to return to the office to deliver paper reports. Travel costs for the organization have been cut 25 percent since implementing the solution, for a savings of \$60,000 annually. “Between eliminating paper charting and reducing unnecessary travel, we’re also seeing a 17 percent increase in clinician productivity,” said Sorensen. “That increased productivity is directed entirely to revenue generating activity.”

Netsmart Homecare is driving even further reductions in operational expenses by helping the organization to control staffing costs. Prior to Netsmart, First Choice Home Health and Hospice staffed four positions dedicated to filing charts and an additional two positions performing full-time data entry. This has all been replaced with one fulltime employee who works with Netsmart AllDocs to scan old paper charts—for only ¼ of their time. At an estimated \$40,000 annual salary plus benefits per position, First Choice Home Health and Hospice is saving \$200,000 annually. The operational efficiency afforded by the built-in auditing functionality of Netsmart Homecare enabled First Choice Home Health and Hospice to also cut two auditing staff positions for an additional savings of \$85,000.

Netsmart Homecare transformed First Choice Home Health and Hospice into a tighter, more productive, more cost efficient, and higher revenue-generating operation. The technology stands ready to also fuel the organization’s growth. “This system is very scalable,” declared Sorensen. “Netsmart had everything we needed to scale from 150 patients, to our current operation with multiple locations and many hundreds of patients. I’m sure they will keep pace with our plans well into the future.”

Learn more about Netsmart clients at www.ntst.com/Hear-From-Clients

About Netsmart

Netsmart designs, builds and delivers electronic health records (EHRs), solutions and services that are power-ful, intuitive and easy-to-use. Our platform provides accurate, up-to-date information that is easily accessible to care team members in behavioral health, care at home, senior living and social services. We make the complex simple and personalized so our clients can concentrate on what they do best: provide services and treatment that support whole-person care.

By leveraging the powerful Netsmart network, care providers can seamlessly and securely integrate information across communities, collaborate on the most effective treatments and improve outcomes for those in their care. Our streamlined systems and personalized workflows put relevant information at the fingertips of users when and where they need it.

For 50 years, Netsmart has been committed to providing a common platform to integrate care. SIMPLE. PERSONAL. POWERFUL.