



Patagonia Health EHR System Brings Continuity of Care, Faster Reimbursement, and Streamlined Reviews to FOCUS Behavioral Health Services



BACKGROUND

Pam Douglas, program director of FOCUS Behavioral Health, oversees a staff of more than 90 clinicians, healthcare providers, and other support personnel across a four-county system in the foothills of North Carolina. FOCUS Behavioral Health provides 24/7 residential, outpatient, and day treatment services for children and their families.

Federal mandates and the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), a national accrediting body, require the implementation of an electronic health record (EHR) system for paperless records and transparent billing lifecycle. In order to meet federal funding requirements and receive full CARF accreditation, Douglas and her leadership team had to find an affordable EHR solution that would also ultimately improve billing processes and internal workflow efficiencies.

Based on colleagues' recommendations and a review of competitive solutions, Douglas and her team selected the Patagonia Health integrated EHR, practice management and billing solution. Affordability, user-friendliness, and the quality of customer service were the ultimate factors that led to the agency's selection of the Patagonia integrated EHR solution.

SOLUTION

Increased pressure from federal mandates and accreditation bodies has required behavioral agencies to be more transparent with costs and outcomes by increasing patient record accessibility, creating billing efficiencies, and increasing operational workflow. In response, Patagonia Health optimized its integrated EHR solution with behavioral-specific apps to help their customers meet the unique needs of this sector.

These apps allow behavioral health agencies such as FOCUS to organize client records and improve workflow efficiencies for mental health services, developmental disabilities services, outpatient case management, diagnostic assessments, and substance abuse services.

PROCESS

FOCUS Behavioral Health slowly began to implement Patagonia's integrated EHR solution in September 2012, starting with a two-day general training session for its executive leadership team. Quality Management Training Director Jennifer Russell and IT Director Josh Stone were instrumental in developing a plan to roll out customized behavioral health apps across each of the FOCUS-affiliated facilities and train all employees on the system.

"We were initially afraid of the prospect of rolling out a new system across all of our facilities since we are a small agency and each of us wears many hats,"

KEY BENEFITS

- Web-based solution requires no up-front installation costs or inhouse hosting
- As many as 10 hours saved during week, 3 hours on weekends
- Immediate access to patient records saves time, money
- Intuitive, easy-to-use solution requires minimal to no training; no IT headache
- Organization and maximum efficiency
- Anywhere, anytime access



said Russell. "However, in reality, the process has actually gone very smoothly. We approached the implementation process very purposefully and slowly—one service at a time. Overall, it has been a very easy learning curve for our staff."

FOCUS' approach to implementation allowed the leadership team to collaborate with Patagonia to ensure all of the requirements for each service were specifically addressed and met. For example, staff members come in over three shifts throughout the day for patients in the 24-hour group home residential service. Each shift change requires individual notations in the system, totaling three notes per day. Patagonia designed an app that allows clinicians to submit their individual notes for the patient throughout shift changes with only one billing event triggered in the system per day.

BENEFITS

Overall, the biggest benefit the FOCUS Behavioral Health agency has experienced with the Patagonia integrated EHR solution is its ability to improve patients' continuity of care. In addition, FOCUS has benefitted in the following ways:

- **Improved workflow and efficiencies:** Paperless records allow FOCUS to serve multiple clients requiring multiple services more efficiently. From a qualitative perspective, clinicians across shifts and/or residential, outpatient, and day treatment sites are able to easily review a client's treatment plan and records from one comprehensive source.
- **Faster reimbursement:** An easy-to-use billing system makes the process of billing to Medicaid and other 3rd party insurance companies more efficient, allowing FOCUS to get reimbursed more quickly. In addition, the improved billing processes revealed payment gaps that FOCUS was not even aware of, which further increased consistent money flow into the agency.
- **Limited IT maintenance:** The Patagonia integrated EHR solution requires very little support and maintenance, has few IT requirements, and does not require a secure server on site as all data is stored securely on the cloud. According to IT Director Josh Stone, "the accessibility of data and limited IT requirements has been very convenient and one of the biggest IT-related advantages of the Patagonia system."
- **Streamlined accreditation and monitoring reviews:** The Patagonia integrated EHR solution allows FOCUS to easily ready patient records required for its national accreditation review. In addition, the system allows FOCUS to quickly pull together data prior to local management agency monitoring reviews.



"We recently completed our first monitoring by a local management agency since implementing our EHR system," said Douglas. "The process of pulling data for this review was so much easier with Patagonia versus having to go into medical records and pulling multiple charts that were bulging full of paper. Now, I can simply sit at my desk and electronically pull the records and data I need. The time saved in this process is hugely significant."

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