

At A Glance

Organization

- Largest privately-held Medicare-certified agency in Michigan
- Six offices and four business lines, including home health, hospice, HME and private duty

Solution spotlight

- Horizon Homecare

Critical issues

- Improve scheduling efficiency
- Eliminate unauthorized visits
- Reduce scheduling resources

Results

- Scheduling efficiency went up from 15% to 90% in the first six months
- Eliminated all unauthorized visits
- Reduced scheduling staff from 5 FTEs to 2.0 FTEs
- Ensured no visits are scheduled without MD orders

Great Lakes Home Health Reduces Operating Expenses by Increasing Scheduling Efficiency

Profile

Founded in 1994 in Jackson, MI, Great Lakes Home Health and Hospice is a full service and award-winning home health care agency with six locations and four business lines. The largest privately-held Medicare-certified home health agency in Michigan, it specializes in Home Health, Hospice, Home Medical Equipment and Private Duty Care.

Great Lakes' awards and accomplishments include:

- #1 in patient care outcomes among primary providers in mid-Michigan
- According to patient satisfaction surveys, has a patient satisfaction rate of 98%.
- Named United States Small Business Administration Michigan Small Business of the Year 2003

Challenges

Great Lakes began implementing Horizon Homecare in November 2003. From the beginning, Great Lakes project manager, Carry VandenMaagdenberg recognized a unique opportunity to automate the agency's scheduling functions and saw in the Horizon Homecare **automatic scheduler** a chance to eliminate labor-intensive and time-consuming scheduling tasks.

Carry identified several goals for the

automatic scheduler:

- Increase scheduling efficiency from 15% to 90% in the first six months
- Eliminate unauthorized visits (3% of total visits before the Horizon Homecare implementation)
- Reallocate and reduce scheduling resources from 5 FTEs to 2 FTEs for the entire agency
- Track all customer contact and employee time

Answers

To effectively use the automatic scheduler, a scheduler must understand and use a variety of areas within Horizon Homecare. With this in mind, Carry made sure schedulers were part of the initial implementation team from the beginning. Great Lakes began using the automatic scheduler in a very controlled environment. It started with one site and with only one discipline, Skilled Nursing.

The agency's process began with assigning employees to teams related to geographical location and disease specialties. At time of referral, the scheduler associated the personnel by using team associations based on the patient's geographical area and/or diagnosis and assigns the appropriate ranking to each associated personnel. Working and model calendars were created for all clinical staff by using

Case Study

“The automatic scheduler (in Horizon Homecare) has enabled us to reduce mileage for staff and increase continuity of care, resulting in improved productivity and an increase in average time spent in patients’ homes due to a decrease in drive time.”

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the Model Calendar and Working Calendar programs.

These calendars were updated as needed. Throughout the day, orders were created by clinical staff who communicated with schedulers via the use of a “scheduling communication” note, sent as a follow-up note to the “scheduling employee” (generic user). The schedulers generated orders using the **Create Service Orders** program, and they assigned days/dates of service based on the information they received from follow-up notes. Every Amount, Frequency, and Duration order was accompanied by a scheduling communication follow-up note.

In the afternoon, schedulers activated the automatic scheduler, and the system analyzed, calculated, and then assigned the “best fit” to each “Open Visit” for the time frame selected, considering the availability of field staff determined by their working calendars. The system used license requirements, duration in minutes, ranking order, and availability to assign the scheduled visits.

Great Lakes personnel soon saw the automatic scheduler in a positive light and realized it would save all involved a tremendous amount of time and trouble. Under Carry’s direction, the remaining personnel were added to the system, and soon the other branches were

all scheduled from one centralized location. Within 6-8 weeks, Great Lakes had successfully implemented the automatic scheduler and not only achieved all its implementation goals, but also experienced other positive outcomes.

Results

Today, after making the automatic scheduler a vital part of its work cycle, Great Lakes has achieved or surpassed all its implementation goals:

- Scheduling efficiency went up from 15% to 90% in the first six months. All Carry has to do, she says, is “run the Automatic Scheduler, and I know that 75% – 90% of all visits will be appropriately assigned.”
- The new process eliminated all unauthorized visits (formerly 3%).
- Great Lakes reduced its scheduling staff to 2.0 FTEs (shared across three employees). Later, even after doubling in size, it did not need to add additional schedulers.
- Other than Private Duty, Great Lakes processes all visits and visit types through the automatic scheduler.
- The process has allowed the scheduling department to track Amount, Frequency and Duration orders concurrently to assure no visits are scheduled without MD orders, and Great Lakes plans to use the scheduler functionality to replace some QA billing audit functions (i.e., “counting visits”).

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