

Cherokee Regional Medical Center

A Certification Success Story

Overview

Customer Profile

Cherokee Regional Medical Center offers a full range of services to residents of Cherokee County, Iowa and the surrounding counties through a 25-bed critical access hospital, four regional medical clinics, senior housing, hospice, home health, public health, and wellness services.

Business Challenge

Cherokee Regional Medical Center runs four regional medical clinics located in Cherokee, Holstein, Marcus, and Aurelia, Iowa. At the time Midwest Health Care began working with them, two of the four clinics (Cherokee and Holstein) were certified Rural Health Clinics and the other two were beginning the process of becoming certified as RHCs. All four clinics were up for accreditation surveys soon, and Cherokee CEO Gary Jordan knew they needed to be proactive to prepare for the surveys.

Solution

CEO Jordan hired Midwest Health Care to prepare the two non-certified sites in Marcus and Aurelia for RHC certification. Midwest Health Care provided a third-party review process that included three phases: (1) pre-site counseling and fact finding, (2) an on-site review, and (3) a post-review meeting to go over the findings.

Results

While Midwest Health Care was reviewing the Marcus and Aurelia sites to prepare them for RHC certification, the Cherokee site came up for review, and shortly after that, the Holstein site was reviewed. Cherokee Regional staff was able to use the review findings, reference tools, and policies and procedures samples provided by Midwest Health Care to not only get the Marcus and Aurelia sites accredited, but they also used the materials to prepare the Cherokee and Holstein sites to pass their surveys. In addition, the collaboration with Midwest Health Care sped the process up substantially, leading to an almost immediate increase in profits.

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*Lexi Henson, R.N.,
Clinic Manager for
Cherokee Regional
Medical Center*

“Like a Legit Survey”

Lexi Henson laughs when she recalls the day Midwest Health Care arrived to review two of Cherokee Regional Medical Center’s clinic sites in order to prepare them for Rural Health Clinic certification.

“They started going into exam rooms and opening drawers and looking at outdates and stuff. Everybody was like, ‘Oh my God, we’re getting surveyed!’ It was intense, for sure.”

Henson, who is a registered nurse and at the time was the clinic manager for the four family practice clinics owned by Cherokee Regional Medical Center in Cherokee, Iowa, had been expecting the arrival of the team from Midwest Health Care, but had completely different expectations for how the visit would go.

It was June 2019, and she had been informed that Midwest Health Care had been contracted to help get two of Cherokee Regional’s clinics (the Marcus and Aurelia facilities) ready for Rural Health Clinic certification.

When asked if she had said anything to her staff to prepare them for the visit, she replied, “No, I didn’t because honestly, I didn’t realize they were going to come in and do such an intense survey.”

She laughs again and admits, “If I remember correctly, I just told them I was going to be spending the day with a team of people that were going to help us with surveys. I thought they were maybe just going to walk around and look around a little bit. I didn’t realize it was going to be like a legit survey.”

Killing Four Birds with One Stone

As it turns out, Cherokee Regional got a lot more value from Midwest Health Care’s work than they expected.

“Technically,” Henson said, “they only worked with us on the two that were not certified, but what happened is that right after they started, we had the inspection in our Cherokee clinic. Our state inspectors walked in about a month after Glen and his team had started working with me. So, they essentially helped me with that state survey too.

“And then, right after that I went and fixed Holstein because the state surveyors, while they were on site at Cherokee, indicated that we were going to be surveyed in Holstein next.

“Then, once we passed both of those surveys, we were able to focus on Marcus and Aurelia. In fact, the staff in those locations had already started because I share staff between locations and so they knew what we were doing in Cherokee and Holstein.



“I put people in charge of outdates and I put people in charge of changing processes, and I put people in charge of signage...just all kinds of different areas.

“Emergency preparedness was a big one for us. We were written up for a conditional level write up for that on our previous survey. Glen and his team were instrumental in helping us get that whole process put together and the training done.”

The end result was that, not only did the Marcus and Aurelia facilities get accredited as Rural Health Clinics, but the Cherokee and Holstein facilities passed their surveys with flying colors, as well.

*Cherokee Regional
Medical Center in
Cherokee, Iowa*

The Tools to Do the Job Right

Thinking back on the initial days that Midwest Health Care was on site reviewing the Marcus and Aurelia facilities and delivering their report, Lexi can't help but reflect on how helpful the entire process was—but that doesn't mean it was easy.

“I remember during the days they were there,” she said, “that I was making notes like a madwoman. Glen took tons of pictures and sent me back a whole report with pictures so I could actually see the examples he was referring to. They put it all into a nice format and sent it to me.

“It was a quick turnaround. They were very expedient so I could get working on everything right away.

When asked about what she found most helpful from the process, she replied, “They sent me tools to use. That was a godsend. The sample policies and procedures they gave me, I was able to change some things and use them to meet my own needs. That was huge!

“When the state walked in to survey Cherokee, I probably had 50 policies that I needed to write, and I was able to use a lot of what Midwest Health Care gave me. That saved me an incredible amount of time and stress.”

And that time savings led to another major benefit: because of the extensive review and the helpful tools supplied by Midwest Health Care, the Marcus and Aurelia sites were able to move fast and get accredited more quickly, leading almost immediately to higher profits.

By even a conservative estimate, the process sped up accreditation by 90 days, and the switch to cost-based reimbursement during that period at least doubled the income the two clinics received from Medicare visits. For example (again, using conservative estimates), if each clinic received \$100 more in reimbursement per Medicare visit and had five such visits per day, multiplied by 90 days, that meant that each clinic brought in \$45,000 more over that period than it would have:

5 visits per day X \$100 more per visit X 90 days
= \$45,000. Not a bad “side benefit!”

A Sense of Confidence Moving Forward

Any business that faces regular oversight reviews knows that the entire process can be stressful. And that’s why having a company like Midwest Health Care do an on-site review in advance can be so beneficial.

According to Cherokee Regional CEO Gary Jordan, “Having the surveyors come so quickly after Midwest Health Care helped us validated what Midwest Health Care had been telling us.”



*The confident staff at
Cherokee Regional
Health Center*

Moving forward, Lexi Henson knows that the staff at all four of Cherokee Regional’s clinics will be better prepared. “You always know they can come back at any time, but after our most recent experience, we felt like we were prepared for anything. We felt confident and very accomplished, like we knew the processes and policies better.

“I think we feel ready for surveys going forward. We know we’re doing the right thing now.”

Preparing for Rural Health Clinic Certification

Midwest Health Care, Inc. provides assistance to clients’ practices in rural communities in becoming designated as Rural Health Clinics. They also provide billing services and other administrative support, as well as credentialing services.



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