

Company: Family Health Centers of San Diego

Family Health Centers of San Diego provides comprehensive, accessible, quality health care services to residents, communities and community-based organizations in San Diego and the surrounding region. The private non-profit offers affordable services to all income levels, with a special commitment to low income and medically under-served individuals.

Website: www.fhcsd.org

Business Challenge: In an effort to provide all San Diego residents with complete and quality health care regardless of annual income, the Family Health Centers of San Diego (FHCSO) launched an initiative to rely more on electronic patient records within the next few years. By digitizing patient records, imaging and prescriptions, patients would receive faster and more accurate care while reducing the potential for human error. However, ensuring that healthcare professionals have access to the organization's homegrown patient tracking system and protecting the more than 10 TBs of personal patient data under strict HIPAA requirements, quickly became a major IT management pain.

Solution: FHCSO deployed a remote and automatic systems management solution from Kaseya that gives its IT staff a complete view into its server and workstation environments and streamlines software deployment and Windows patch management. By being able to access any system on the network from a central management console and by automating basic administrative tasks, the IT staff is able to use Kaseya to reduce complexity and build consistency into the computing environment, improving the availability of FHCSO's patient tracking application and enabling the clinics to go digital.

**Systems Availability Critical to Reducing Reliance on Paper Patient Records**

The Family Health Centers of San Diego (FHCSO), a private non-profit organization serving the health care needs of San Diego County since 1970, recently embarked on an initiative to improve patient care by reducing its reliance on paper records. While close to a reality today, the organization hopes to digitize paper records within the next two years in hopes of streamlining customer service and health care while reducing the possibility of human error caused by handwriting or clerical mistakes. The organization's digital initiative—a monumental task for any healthcare organization – is especially challenging given that FHCSO mainly serves low-income residents, most who live under the poverty line and without health insurance.

The task of supporting a digital clinic network and ensuring electronic systems are available when needed will fall to a small IT staff. The team of four – an operations manager and three administrators – must manage the extensive server environment that runs the organization's support systems and medical applications, including a proprietary clinic management information system. The SQL-based application took five programmers, a database administrator and the CIO nearly two years to build from scratch with Microsoft Visual Basic. The solution tracks all patients from when they walk in the door until they are discharged hours, even days later.

"As long as they are within our walls, the application knows exactly what department they are in, what tests have been run, the results of those tests and any prescriptions given. All our doctors, nurses, pharmacists and social workers use the system and rely on it every day to provide our services to patients," said Scott Walters, IT operations manager, FHCSO. "Without it, we wouldn't be able to provide health care services to the people in the community that need it most."

Because of the home-grown application's importance to patient care, the electronic clinic wouldn't be a reality without a robust systems management solution in place to manage the extensive server environment required to run the application or a software deployment tool that efficiently pushes software updates to all systems on the network.

As robust and powerful as the proprietary application is, it still requires some tinkering now and then, requiring Walters to reinstall the client on every workstation as often as once per week. The process had to be conducted during 'slow' times as to not disturb end user performance, forcing Walters to spend many nights at the office past midnight as well as all day on Sundays.

In addition, the complexity of the server environment and the distributed workstations affected the staff's ability to keep up with help desk issues, preventing health care professionals from accessing medical systems and patient data at any time. With more than 650 employees using 540 workstations in dozens of clinics scattered throughout the metropolitan area, there simply wasn't enough hours in the day to resolve every ticket issued over the past 24 hours. As a result from being overstretched, FHCSO maintained 85 to 90 percent availability of its critical business applications, an unacceptable percentage in an industry where the accessibility of data is literally a life or death matter.

Remote, Automatic Systems Management

To gain better visibility into the distributed environment and to improve application availability, FHCS D deployed a remote and automatic systems management solution from Kaseya. The solution provided administrators with a central management console in which to take control of distributed workstations, maintain their health and ensure they are updated with necessary software updates and security patches. Now, when the developer staff releases a new version of the clinic management information system, Walters simply allows the Kaseya solution to automatically and consistently deploy the updates throughout the computing environment. He can now ensure that all workstations and servers are up-to-date with the new version, improving performance, availability and security while enabling the organization's vision of reducing its reliance on paper records.

"While I originally purchased and deployed Kaseya purely for software deployment purposes, it quickly morphed into the single most critical systems management solution for our organization," Walters said. "We now use Kaseya for patch management, help desk, remote access, HIPAA compliance and monitoring."

The Kaseya solution has also allowed FHCS D to apply for and win a state grant called First 5 Special Needs Program that helps ensure California children under five years of age receive proactive screening, testing and preventative care they need to develop into healthy, mature adults. As a state-wide program, FHCS D must share information with other agencies and organizations, a capability made possible through the organization's highly available storage area network managed by the Kaseya solution.

Availability of Mission-Critical Business Applications Key

Since deploying the Kaseya solution, availability of the clinic management information system has improved from 85-90 percent available to 99.6 percent available, making the organization's senior management team comfortable with relying exclusively on the electronic patient tracking system. Protected and insured through Kaseya, the clinic management solution is able to electronically keep track of the more than 300,000 annual patient visits throughout the FHCS D network from more than 70,000 individual patients, ensuring that San Diego residents have access to complete and affordable health care, regardless of income level or insurance status.

Key Benefits

- Availability of mission critical business applications has improved from 85 percent to 99.6 percent, making the electronic healthcare organization a reality for patients of all income levels
- Health care professionals have access to the tools and patient information they need, improving customer service and patient care
- Administrators are able to automatically push software updates to distributed systems, ensuring consistency throughout the environment
- IT administration is greatly reduced, eliminating the need for the staff to 'catch up' during the evenings and on Sundays

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"Software deployment is no longer an IT management pain," Walters said. "We can now be assured that all systems have the latest software version in place and our employees will be able to log in and access the system without any major problems. If minor problems do occur, my staff knows that I'm a stickler about resolving help desk tickets as quickly and efficiently as possible. They'll hear from me if all tickets aren't resolved in under 24 hours. That's grounds for a butt chewing."

FHCS D has also been able to streamline and simplify IT operations, saving hundreds of man hours per year and thousands of dollars from the annual budget. Walters no longer has to come in on the weekends or stay late during the week to push out software updates since Kaseya automatically does it for him, saving nearly 10 hours a week in administration time and freeing his evenings and Sundays for family and personal time.

In addition, administrators don't have to scour through spreadsheets or file cabinets for information on individual systems. Instead, they simply access the data through the centralized Kaseya solution, saving valuable minutes when resolving software issues. Access to equipment data also helps optimize equipment utilization, helping maintain server maintenance, upgrade and retirement schedules and eliminating the need to over-provision resources. Walters has also been able to eliminate one help desk administrator position, saving the non-profit tens of thousands of dollars each year. By proactively managing infrastructure, FHCS D is able to stretch its meager non-profit budget and better plan for the future.

"Kaseya is the unsung hero in the background. It does everything for us, but nobody – especially the end users – know it's there," Walters said.