

Yavapai County Dept. of Medical Assistance

Information Technology System Improves Productivity and Saves Money for Yavapai County Department of Medical Assistance

Executive Summary

Yavapai County Department of Medical Assistance used an antiquated processing system that was operated by an outside vendor. They had to request custom reports in a process that inefficient, time consuming and costly. Plexis provided a user-friendly, Windows-based system that allowed Yavapai to create and run our own reports, which saved county a significant amount of money and time. By tailoring a system to their unique business, Plexis also helped Yavapai serve clients more efficiently and even improved the level of care in many instances.

Background

The Yavapai County Department of Medical Assistance serves the needs of elderly and disabled persons, including children, in Yavapai County Arizona. In Arizona, Medicaid is called Arizona Long Term Care Services (ALTCS). Yavapai County acts as a patient advocate for their covered clients and does all of their billing to ALTCS. Yavapai provides a wide range of services to its constituents who include patients living in nursing homes and assisted living environments and recipients of adult day care and home health care. They also provide homemaking and personal care classes and home delivered meals.

Problem

One of the major challenges that the department's employees faced as they provided their very necessary services was an antiquated computer system that was operated by an outside vendor. It was a DOS-based system with programs written in COBOL so it was impossible to get any kind of report out of the system without going to the vendor and asking them to program a customized report. This was very inefficient, time consuming and costly.

About two and a half years ago, Yavapai County began a search for a more efficient approach to their information technology needs. The department's employees were in agreement that they needed to acquire a user-friendly, Windows®-based system that they could easily access without going through a third party. According to Becky Ducharme, Business Office Manager at the Yavapai County Department of Medical Assistance, they also wanted an open architecture system that would allow them to create multiple custom databases so they could efficiently make use of all their stored information.

Custom Solutions

After an extensive search and a functionality review of several vendors' systems, the department selected an information technology and claims processing system from an Oregon-based information technology company.

“After our implementation, which went very smoothly, due to excellent onsite support and help with our data conversion, our first project was to create a customized authorization database,” said Ms. Ducharme. “We have to get authorization for our services three months at a time; before we created our customized database, we had to do a great deal of duplicate data entry. Now, we enter the authorization information one time and simply cut and paste any new data into each month’s authorization. This is a big time saver for our department and significantly increases our productivity,” Ms. Ducharme continued.

“The system has also helped us serve our clients more efficiently and even improved the level of care in some instances. We now get patient information out to the providers more quickly so they can schedule treatments and procedures faster. We also get home care equipment, such as oxygen, to clients more expeditiously,” Ms Ducharme added.

Due to the wide range of services they provide and the varied client base they serve, Yavapai County required that several customized information technology solutions be developed for them. In particular, they needed to add several custom adjudication rules to their claims processing program to handle their special requirements. Their IT vendor pioneered and offers a unique auto-adjudication, rules-based editor technology that allows clients to add, change or delete rules according to their specific requirements. Rather than viewing adjudication as a single complex process, rules based adjudication looks at it as a series of critical steps. Each step has a rule that describes how the system is to execute that step. A number of different rules are provided for each step, and Yavapai was able to select the rules that best met their special needs.

Because the steps are independent, rules can be mixed and matched to meet an almost unlimited variety of adjudication provisions. Also, because the steps are independent, a new rule can be easily written for a given step with assurance that it won’t affect other parts of the processing. For Yavapai, this makes changing existing functionality and adding new functionality fast, inexpensive, and safe.

Another custom solution that Yavapai had developed for them was the automatic creation of UB claims for their patients living in nursing homes. This customized feature automatically creates claims, reviews and edits them for each specified nursing home patient. “One of the most positive effects the system has had on our department is improved compatibility with other units in our office. The open architecture and Microsoft® platform allows us to share data with other departments. Units such as Quality Assurance can now query our data to help them do their jobs. And, conversely our claims department can pull data from other units when we create our custom databases,” Ms. Ducharme remarked.

“Being able to create and run our own reports has saved us a significant amount of money and time,” Ms. Ducharme said. As mentioned previously, prior to our new system, we had to request reports on our own data from the outside vendor. It just wasn’t economically feasible or efficient. Our department employees continually want to look at data from different viewpoints, depending on their job requirements. Using Microsoft Access, we can now query

all the tables and information stored in the system to create an unlimited number of reports in-house,” Ms. Ducharme continued.

“Another feature that allows us to create ad hoc reports and move data into and out of our system easily is an EDI toolkit. This tool provides us with a wide range of custom import and export formats to transfer our eligibility files, encounter data and electronic claims information to crucial applications. The EDI tool’s open architecture allows us to move data to and from multiple sources. We move data into and out of the system on a daily basis to the pharmacy benefits manager, to the access administrator for rate setting and to electronic claims clearing houses. The tool also provides validation rules that allow us to develop custom scrubbing rules to meet our specific data validation requirements,” Ms. Ducharme commented.

“When all is said and done, I think the best way to optimize the benefits from your information technology investment is to establish the appropriate relationship with your vendor,” Ms. Ducharme said. “And in my opinion, the way to do this is to create a partnership. From initial implementation to your ongoing working environment, every activity must be viewed as a joint project. We have been very pleased with the support we have received, but we have also worked closely with our vendor to identify areas where we think enhancements can and should be made. If your vendor has a flexible system and will work with you to provide custom solutions to meet your specific needs, you have found a good partner,” Ms. Ducharme concluded.

***Yavapai County Department of Medical Assistance uses information technology systems supplied by Plexis Healthcare Systems, Inc. headquartered in Ashland, OR.
www.plexisweb.com.***