CASE STUDY

Visiting Nurse Association of Hudson Valley and Hospice Care in Westchester and Putnam

Improved communications, competitive equipment pricing and satisfied customers.

As emergency first responders, the staff of the Visiting Nurse Association (VNA) of Hudson Valley is on call around the clock, 365 days a year. To be available to patients, emergency response teams and medical facilities without fail, clinicians and support staff need access to a reliable mobile phone solution.

Shortly after his arrival at VNA of Hudson Valley in 2001, IT Director Ed Fricke implemented cell phone service across the agency. But as the agency’s service area expanded, the organization wanted to ensure it had reliable wireless coverage.

Challenges
VNA of Hudson Valley began offering its services in 1898 as the District Nursing Association (DNA) of Northern Westchester County. In 1990, VNA expanded its hospice care from Westchester into Putnam. As the agency’s services continued to expand northward, IT Director Fricke started receiving reports from his mobile staff about issues with communication. This interfered with their responsiveness to their patients, some of whom were very ill and/or terminal. “We need to be consistently in touch with each other in real time and be able to get through; otherwise we potentially face problems with our patients’ health and lives.” Fricke also had to review each bill carefully to reduce potential errors. “I was unhappy with our account representative, who seemed most interested in selling VNA of Hudson Valley products rather than effectively managing my account.”

Solution
After determining to search for a new provider, Fricke thoroughly reviewed multiple carriers, including their coverage maps and case studies. An important consideration in the selection process was the ability to port all of VNA’s current mobile phone numbers. Fricke’s Verizon Wireless business specialist assured him that VNA would be able to seamlessly carry over its previous numbers and distribute equipment without disruption to the agency or its patients. The ability to support continued growth of the agency and its programs was also an important factor in the decision process.

Fricke then tested both BlackBerry® Tour™ smartphones and Verizon Wireless Mobile Broadband modems to determine their service reliability. “We need service that we can rely on to manage daily activities as well as crisis situations. When our patients are unable to reach us, their only alternative is to call 911. This can result in unnecessary transports and readmissions to the hospital. We need our patients to be able to reach us quickly in order to avoid these situations.”
Fricke also appreciated the competitive pricing options available on the Verizon Wireless equipment. “We were able to get equipment at no cost, or at a competitive price point.” Working closely with his business specialist in implementing Verizon Wireless across the agency helped keep the process simple. “My Verizon Wireless business specialist is very responsive and genuinely concerned about my business.”

Results
Coverage
With Verizon Wireless, VNA of Hudson Valley mobile care nurses can reach their patients, clinicians and other staff engaged in the care of their patients. VNA has also implemented texting for its staff, which provides continuous coverage in case of emergency.

Lower Costs
VNA is also realizing reduced operating costs by re-educating its staff to use their mobile phones instead of the toll-free long distance number. This has helped to eliminate the double charge incurred in using both the toll-free number and mobile minutes. The text packages and the Verizon Wireless Friends & Family* program have also helped to reduce the number of wireless minutes used.

Easier Account Management
VNA uses the Verizon Wireless My Business Account tool to manage its account, which saves Fricke valuable time. “The My Business Account tool makes managing our services easy and efficient. It allows me to do many day-to-day activities so I rarely need to call into Customer Service. And when I do, they are very responsive.”

Business Growth
VNA has greatly increased its reach by using Mobile Broadband modems for its innovative Telehealth program. This free video-call program is offered to patients, allowing them to communicate with their care provider visually via online video streaming. VNA is now able to serve a much larger population of patients via Telehealth instead of incurring the expenses of in-home visits.

Customer Service
Fricke comments, “Our Verizon Wireless business specialist is very responsive, honest and fair, and we consider him, and Verizon Wireless, a partner to our business.” Fricke says that VNA is looking into expanding its use of Verizon Wireless products and services in the future.