

Case Study: PACE Pediatrics

About PACE Pediatrics

Pediatric and Adolescent Care of Minnesota, P.A. (PACE Pediatrics) is the result of the 1995 merger of two well-established pediatric practices serving Saint Paul, MN and the surrounding areas. The practice currently employs 11 doctors and a nurse practitioner and maintains offices in Eagan, Shoreview, White Bear Lake, West Saint Paul, and Woodbury.

About HIPAA

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, commonly referred to as HIPAA, requires that all healthcare organizations implement sweeping changes to existing healthcare transaction and administrative information systems. Over time, HIPAA promises improved efficiency in healthcare delivery by standardizing electronic data interchange and increasing the protection and security of confidential health data.

In the next year, more than a half-million healthcare providers – ranging from solo physician offices to giant health plans and life insurance companies – will spend billions of dollars ensuring their systems and processes are HIPAA compliant. Failure to comply with HIPAA rules may result in severe civil and criminal penalties.

More Work for Administrators

Sue Klingbeil has worked for PACE Pediatrics for twenty years. As the business office administrator, Klingbeil oversees all data entry, coding, reimbursement, forms, and administrative processes. Although Klingbeil has known about HIPAA for several years, she wasn't asked to head up PACE Pediatrics' HIPAA compliance until 2001. "When I heard we had to have a HIPAA compliance plan in place – and began to understand exactly what that meant – my first reaction was, 'Oh no, not more work!'", says Klingbeil. "After attending a HIPAA seminar in October 2001, I still felt very in the dark about what exactly the ramifications and implications would be for PACE."

"While HIPAA has been on the back burner until now, that's about to change," according to Klingbeil. "My personal goal is to have a rough draft of our HIPAA compliance plan completed by the end of March. I expect to be spending quite a few weekends working on that plan between now and then."

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As it turns out, Klingbeil is ahead of the curve. A recent poll of healthcare providers by Gartner Healthcare Industry Research Advisory Services, found that 85% of respondents had not completed assessments of the work required to comply with HIPAA's electronic transaction standards. The study also determined that 68% of respondents were unclear on HIPAA deadlines. Klingbeil knows the deadlines and has a plan in place for ensuring that PACE will be HIPAA compliant.

Evaluating the Options

"My first thought was that we'd need to deal with HIPAA in-house," says Klingbeil. "We're not large enough to warrant hiring a HIPAA compliance officer. We've worked with consultants in the past, but many of them charge an arm and a leg to tell you what you already know." Instead, PACE Pediatrics is one of a growing number of physicians' practices to employ an innovative solution to HIPAA compliance. Rather than hire an individual to assist with the process, PACE opted to save hundreds of hours of frustration and thousands of dollars in consulting fees by using HIPAAAnswers™.

A Helping Hand

"HIPAAAnswers provides me with a safety net," says Klingbeil. "Knowing that I would have access to all of the published regulations in an easy to understand format, be able to customize an entire library of templates, and benefit from the knowledge of expert consultants without paying their hourly rates, really put me at ease." Klingbeil is quick to point out that HIPAAAnswers has more than lived up to its promises. "On a scale from one to ten, I give HIPAAAnswers a solid 10," says Klingbeil. "HIPAAAnswers gives me a solid base of understanding. Just using the product has made me feel more comfortable. Access to the templates has been a huge weight off my shoulders."

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Klingbeil estimates that HIPAAAnswers will save her the equivalent of four weeks of work – approximately 160 hours - over the next year. "I would have been overwhelmed without HIPAAAnswers," says Klingbeil. "With it, I'm confident I'll be able to come up a compliance plan in far less time than otherwise would have been possible."

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About HIPAAAnswers

More than just a gap analysis or tracking tool, HIPAAAnswers helps healthcare providers understand the HIPAA regulations and provides useful suggestions and advice for complying with them. "HIPAAAnswers walks small- and medium-sized organizations through the entire compliance process," says Scott Thiele, President of Hard Lake, Inc., creator of HIPAAAnswers. "These practices are responsible for complying with the exact same regulations as the major players," says Thiele, "but they don't have anywhere near the budget. HIPAAAnswers levels the playing field."

Thiele enlisted Dirk Niles and a team of experienced healthcare consultants to devise a solution which would be both cost-effective and prove invaluable to users. "We took a 'consultant-in-a-box' approach to developing HIPAAAnswers," says Niles. Since the product is entirely web-enabled, the knowledge base is continually expanding to reflect the latest legislative developments and current best practices. Recent enhancements include a guide to assist users in better understanding HIPAA and its impact on their organization and a task matrix which outlines the action items required to complete each step of HIPAA compliance.

The web-enabled product, available online through a secure website, is designed for use by solo and group physician practices, hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, pharmacies, vision centers, and other organizations involved in providing patient care or maintaining patient data.

Contact Information

For more information on HIPAAAnswers, visit the company online at www.hipaanswers.com, email sales@hipaanswers.com, or call us toll-free at 1-866-326-6785.