



MedConnect

CASE STUDY: How South of Market Health Center Significantly Reduced HIT Costs And Delivered An Improved Provider Experience With MedConnect

WHY READ

In addition to complying with strict HIPAA regulations, financial pressures require Community Health Centers to squeeze more out of their health information technology (HIT) investments to serve their community most effectively.

This case study outlines how South of Market Health Center partnered with MedConnect to implement HIT that reduced the community health center's costs while improving the patient and provider experience.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. South of Market Health Center reduced costs by eliminating overlapping IT services and more efficiently connecting existing systems.
2. The community health center improved provider and patient experience with network redundancy.
3. MedConnect supplemented the South of Market Health Center IT staff with efficient help desk support so the internal IT could focus exclusively on high-tier IT tickets.



South of Market
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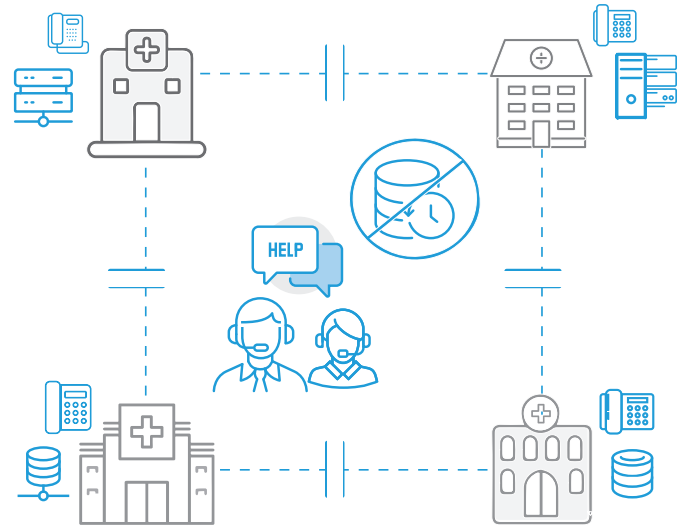


The Challenge

Disconnected IT Services Added Costs and Disrupted South of Market Health Center's Patient and Provider Experience

South of Market Health Center is a private, non-profit Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) providing quality care that is affordable and accessible to underserved communities in the San Francisco area.

The community health center operates four clinic sites in the South of Market and Bayview areas of San Francisco and serves 4,200 patients with 60 employees. In 2019, the community health center was challenged with:



- **Separate telephone and internet systems across health center sites.** South of Market Health Center had separate telephone and internet communication systems across each of its four sites. Asa Satariano, CEO of South of Market Health Center, was concerned that the health center was overpaying for communication services. *“With four locations, our communication systems were individual to each site, which meant that we were unnecessarily draining resources.”* Furthermore, when employees from one site needed to consult an employee at another, they needed to use the external phone lines. Using external phone lines for internal conversations tied up the phone line, which meant that, while one provider was consulting another, patients could not get through to the community health center. *“There were times when patients would get busy signals because six phone lines were tied up in what should have been an internal phone call,” explained Satariano.*
- **A lack of core IT infrastructure redundancies.** Due to uncontrollable externalities, South of Market Health Center's internet access was frequently being interrupted. Without a backup connection, providers could not access the community health center's EHR. While the internet was out, providers could not access patient information, and had to note new patient information manually and later scan it into the EHR. Providers had to spend more of their time on non-patient-centered work and it often meant that providers had to spend much more time asking patients questions that would have been answered in their health record.
- **An overloaded internal IT help desk.** The health center's internal IT team was spread thin, managing everything from important x-ray software updates to managing and improving its EHR. But, increasingly, lower-tier issues such as password resets were dividing the IT team's focus. When a provider needed technical assistance, IT team members had to deprioritize important long-term initiatives to put out the fire; otherwise, the provider would have to wait before logging in to a core system or printing a document for a patient. *As Satariano put it: “if a provider can't print or log in - they don't want to wait two hours, three hours, or until the next day to get help, they are looking for that help now.”*

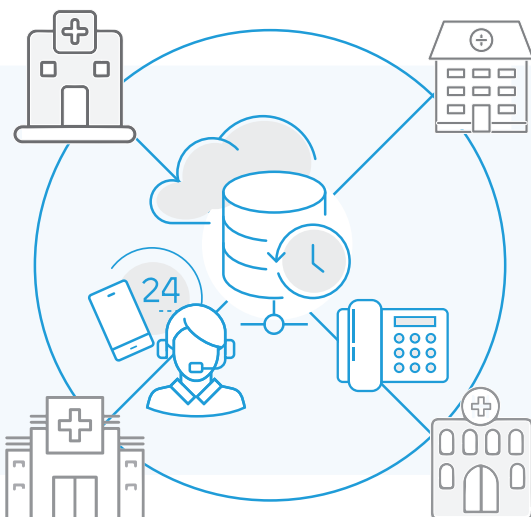


Solution

Integrated, HIPAA-Compliant, IT Systems Significantly Reduced Costs and Improved the FQHC's Patient and Provider Experience

Once the South of Market Health Center team selected MedConnect, the MedConnect team helped the community health center:

- **Reduce costs by consolidating IT communication systems.** The MedConnect team began with a discovery process by tracing all communication systems across the four clinic sites. The process identified overlapping systems and uncovered opportunities for connecting each. By consolidating South of Market Health Center's phone systems, the community health center reduced costs, providers could more easily utilize internal numbers to contact internal departments across sites, and internal calls no longer blocked patient calls. *"It guarantees that when a patient calls it is going to ring and it is going to be answered somewhere in the clinic," stated Satariano.*
- **Improve the provider and patient experience with reliable access to core systems.** The MedConnect team helped the community health center implement internet redundancy so that when the internet went down, there was a backup in place to restore it quickly. Now, providers can consistently access core systems such as the EHR, assuring that patients' records are consistently, up-to-date so they can perform better diagnosis or treatment.
- **Supplement the community health center's IT staff.** The MedConnect team helped South of Market Health Center facilitate efficiencies by implementing a formal IT ticketing system and providing first and second-tier IT help desk support. Providers now get immediate and in-context help desk support, and the internal IT team is freed up to focus on the highest priority IT tasks, such as updating the health center's medical device software and EHR. *"Now if something doesn't work," explained Satariano, "you just click the button, make a ticket, and there is a whole staff of people behind the scenes that can jump in and help with that."*



"The external help desk support feels like an extension of my team - I feel like I went from a team of two to having the resources of a much larger team."

Justina Wang, IT Manager



Conclusion

Improving Affordable Access to Care, Backed by MedConnect

South of Market Health Center continues to expand health information technologies and IT services that increase access to care regardless of an individual's cultural, social, and ethnic background or economic circumstances.

With Medconnect as their operational backbone, South of Market Health Center can provide a positive patient experience for the community and has improved the job satisfaction of its staff.

As South of Market Health Center expands its reach and works to serve its community, they are confident that they are building on the right HIPAA-compliant solution built on best-in-class Health Information Technologies (HIT).



"We are a more efficient organization as a result of the work the MedConnect team has done. More importantly, we feel confident that the team and technology behind the MedConnect solution are invested in our success."

Asa Satariano, CEO



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