Become a FQHC
Health IT Hero!

Definitive Guide to Health IT for
Federally Qualified Health Centers.

MyConnectSolutions
Worry-Free IT Management

Who is this eBook for?

This eBook is for anyone:

Administrators, physician practice owners, clinicians and practitioners, practice staff, and other resources who want to leverage health IT (HIT) in their organization.

Why read this eBook?

- Review best practices in healthcare information and management systems
- Show commitment to continuing to improve HIT in the organization
- Ensure complete HIPAA compliance

Contents

Technology Available in Certain Areas

Are Technology Options for FQHCs Limited?

FQHCs face challenges, including higher patient-to-physician ratios, workforce shortages and high turnover. Many perceive technology limitations are a given. Some community health providers feel that they lack access to expertise to modernize technology.

By relying on only immediate options, community health centers respond reactively to what vendors in the area offer. As a result, IT infrastructure tend to be cobbled together and overtime becomes unnecessarily complex, expensive to maintain, less reliable, and less able to protect against cyber security threats.

How should community health centers, with limited resources, overcome the obstacles and adopt newer technology?

Overcome obstacles by changing the status quo!

Why?

- ***It is easier than you think.***

  Many resources and grants are available to guide community healthcare providers towards modernizing HIT which enables a greater focus on the core mission of serving communities.

- ***You can future-proof your practice.***

  With today's adaptive cloud technology to eliminate manual steps, better manage, secure, and share data about patients between practice locations.

- ***You can better ensure HIPAA compliance.***

  When the network and systems comply with HIPAA and HITECH regulations, practices can focus on patient care, save money, work efficiently and retain staff.

How to Become the IT Hero

How to become a health IT hero.

The hero's journey in three steps:

Dispel your misconceptions and organizational complacency. You are not limited to the network and technology vendors in the area. Take advantage of proven, modern HIT that many health centers have implemented.

1 START FRESH

2 ASSESS WHERE YOU ARE

Review your current HIT organization and identify opportunities to upgrade or bridge gaps.

3 EMBRACE THE FUTURE

Prioritize needs, then objectively select and deploy modern HIT solutions.

Step 1: Start Fresh

Sometimes a fresh start is the best approach to facing the challenge.

There has been a notable shift in health IT, from simple data storage to using the technology to lower costs, gain efficiencies and improve patient care.

However for community health centers, implementing, maintaining, updating, and optimizing HIT can be an ongoing challenge.

Start fresh by:

- Dispelling misconceptions or overcome complacency with “immediate” technology options
- Reevaluating your role as an IT leader
- Setting goals for your IT department

Step 1: Start Fresh

Dispel misconceptions about new technology

- The reality is, modern technology and network options are available in both urban and rural areas
- Organizational complacency with current or “immediate” technology puts patients and their information at risk
- There is a wealth of federal and private resources to guide you

Step 1: Start Fresh

Reevaluate your role as an IT leader

Reevaluating your role as an IT leader will help lead your health center towards improving patient health care by improving the network and technology that supports it.

Modern, technology, like cloud-computing, is not going anywhere. Many healthcare systems are adopting this method.

An IT hero can provide proper advocacy and demonstration of functionality which will allow resistant providers to see the benefits and cost saving of migrating to newer HIT.

Health center IT heroes are responsible for:

- Implementing strategies that meet the legal and regulatory aspects of HIT
- Planning, selecting, implementing, and managing electronic health records (EHR) and other health information technology (HIT)
- Managing the workflow and process improvement aspects of HIT
- Hardware and software evaluations
- Managing vendors
- Performing HIPAA Risk Analysis / Risk Assessment - compliance monitoring, oversight, and reporting
- Performing an IT Analysis and Risk Assessment
- Ensuring great user experience for health center staff

Step 1: Start Fresh

Set IT Goals

How do HIT heroes start implementing new technology and face the rising threat of data breaches?

They lead a strategic and technology-based transformation by establishing the right framework, setting priorities and achieving goals.

They implement tools and services that improve the quality of care delivery, reduce provider burden, and enable information sharing.

Other goals include:

- Reduce capital costs
- Address resource constraints
- Enhance technology/tools services and capabilities to users
- Improve system performance
- Improve security

Step 1: Start Fresh

Misconceptions lead to trouble.

Implementing the most up- to-date network and VoIP technologies can be very daunting and perceived to be too expensive for many FQHCs. Even though Federal Telecommunications Programs, such as USAC and CTF discounts offer healthcare providers a discount on telecom expenses, many community health centers end up implementing outdated technologies that have many inherent risks. This was the case for Ace California Community Health Center, (ACCHC - client name changed to protect their privacy).

ACCHC is approximately 60 miles south of Fresno and is a federally qualified and licensed primary care clinic. ACCHC has a small IT team. Their networking and telecom infrastructure became overly complicated with 8 different vendors and 17 different firewalls. The design, not only outdated, became too complicated for the small staff to maintain and too expensive for them to retain.

Client Example

How did they get here?

This overly-complex design was a result of implementing the solutions perceived to be the only options available in their area. They had piecemealed together the systems as their organization grew and locations were added, without much planning.

As a result, the existing infrastructure became a nightmare, with latency issues, security risks and a very slow Practice Management System.

Step 1: Start Fresh

When complacency turns into urgency.

While ACCHC's current design was the standard 15 years ago, when networks were much simpler, today's array of EHR applications, coupled with VoIP, make such networks problematic.

Frustrated with paying too much to maintain for a legacy infrastructure, the CFO sought a new solution to change the status quo for the better. This required looking outside their area for other network and telecom options and learning that enterprise-level IT is possible for FQHCs.

Client Example (cont.)

IT Options and Cost Savings

The CFO discovered that the technologies their FQHC counterparts in urban communities have implemented are also available in their rural area.

Additionally, AACHC learned that migrating from their legacy systems to a more modern, converged SDWAN network with a VoIP unified communications systems, would reduce the number of vendor bills and their overall annual costs by 28%.

Step 2: Assess Where You Are

Billing and Admin

- You come in at 7am and want to run your billing batch. Oops, you are not able to log into your computer, so you call the support desk only to get your IT's voicemail.
- IT calls you back at 7:50 am.
- IT then stops by your desk at 8:15 am and issue is resolved.
- Your center has wasted 75 minutes of productivity.

Physicians

- At 9:00 am Dr. Feel-Good comes into work and is going room to room with her wireless laptop from room to room. She begins to realize that certain rooms can't access the EHR system.
- She calls support who answers but are unable to assist for another 30 minutes.
- The technician arrives to troubleshoot Dr. Feel-Good's laptop to find that the wireless card is damaged.
- It take 3 hours to find a replacement laptop and configure the necessary software and tools.
- Dr. Feel-Good is now Dr. Angry.

Is this familiar?

Step 2: Assess Where You Are

Fax Server Lead

- LovestoFax comes in at 7am and realizes that none of the faxes are sending or receiving.
- She calls support who arrives 10 minutes later and calls the telecom carrier to open a ticket.
- The telecom carrier has to test the line which takes over an hour.
- The carriers informs IT that the line is fine.
- It take IT to identify the issue – they were faxing through their NextGen app and not the inhouse fax server.
- IT support gets pulled away to address an emergency Mail Sever crash, which takes 2 hours to resolve.
- IT finally gets on the call with NextGen support.
- NextGen responds the next day saying they see no issues.
- IT calls the carrier again and continues to bounce back and forth between the carrier and NextGen.
- Faxing has been down for days until NextGen realizes there was an issue with their application.

Is this familiar?

Step 2: Assess Where You Are

Natural Disaster

- Floods (or wild fires) hit California and everyone in the area has to evacuate.
- The servers have crashed and IT is trying to implement backup and recovery amidst the chaos.
- The clinic is down and unable to access its systems.

Is this familiar?

Step 2: Assess Where You Are

Review your current HIT organization

Why?

- Perform a reality check on the current IT organization - design and resources
- Identify any missing components or services, or gaps that violate HIPAA rules
- Reveal areas of opportunities to gain efficiencies and reduce costs

How?

- The HIT Maturity Model is a tool for you to quickly assess where you are.

Maturity Model

Self-analysis covers three critical dimensions in any organization:

- People
- Process
- Technology

Step 2: Assess Where You Are

People

DEVELOPING	INTERMEDIATE	GOOD PRACTICE
• Little to no IT leadership • IT staff reacting to immediate organizational needs and day-to-day support; providing daily operational support & troubleshooting for server and infrastructure applications • Little or unknown HIPAA guidance	• IT leadership but with limited experience with developing and implementing an IT vision, analyzing and translating new emerging technologies into an effective IT strategy • IT staff that stays abreast of emerging technologies and presents solutions for improvement opportunities • IT staff with limited experience in the formation of security and privacy governance processes	• IT leadership with holistic view of IT design with strategy and plan • IT staff with experience in designing and implementing short and long-term plans and roadmaps to ensure infrastructure capacity meets existing and future requirements • IT staff that set priorities for and manages the design, maintenance, development, and evaluation of all infrastructure systems, including physical & virtual servers, networking, storage, database systems and physical infrastructure • IT staff that manages operational costs while continually improving performance for price metrics in accordance with technology advancements • IT staff focused on assuring compliance with information security, privacy and industry standards and regulations

Step 2: Assess Where You Are

Process

DEVELOPING	INTERMEDIATE	GOOD PRACTICE
• No IT design strategy • Aware of what's not working and why • Limited documentation of requirements but no measure of success • Technical support and troubleshooting is like fighting fires	• Partial or outdated IT design or strategy • Limited understanding of what's not working and why • Limited documentation of requirements but no measure of success • Technical issues are prioritized and handled as they arise	• Holistic view of IT design with strategy and plan • Metrics established to measure success • Complete and immediate understanding of what's not working and why • Requirements and use cases documented • Proactively address technical issues before they arise • Access to 24/7/365 outside support for major issues

Step 2: Assess Where You Are

Technology

DEVELOPING	INTERMEDIATE	GOOD PRACTICE
• Use public network • All servers are onsite • No backup or disaster recovery plan • Locations are siloed • Vendors do not have a signed HIPAA BAA (Business Associate Agreement) • Have never conducted a HIPAA Risk Assessment / Analysis • Analog Phone System, no call center capabilities	• Locations are connected but the connection is slow • Most servers are onsite, but still siloed • Limited back-up or disaster recovery • Some vendors do not have a signed HIPAA BAA (Business Associate Agreement) • Have conducted a HIPAA Risk Assessment / Analysis once in the last 3 years • Digital Phone System with PRI with limited Call Center Capabilities	• Private secure fast network • Backup and disaster recovery that meets HIPAA guidelines • Hybrid - Some servers are onsite, others are in the cloud • Locations are connected via unified communications • Conduct a HIPAA Risk Assessment / Analysis every year • Network security • VoIP Unified communication & Call Center • Support / Help desk

Step 2: Assess Where You Are

Map where you want to be: “Good Practice”

Ace California Community Health Center, (ACCHC) had a small IT staff of a few IT people attempting to maintain a tangled, inefficient and expensive network and telecom infrastructure. The network and telecom systems created frustration throughout the organization. Without a clear IT strategy with an eye on the future, ACCHC’s HIT was cobbled together just to meet the basic requirements.

As their organization grew and locations were added, more pieces were added resulting into a problematic infrastructure with latency issues and security risks.

Other problems included:

- Limited connectivity making EMR applications very slow to use
- Little-to-no disaster recovery and business continuity solution in case of natural disasters in the area, like fire, earthquakes, flood and mudslides
- Lacked adequate connectivity to integrate sites on a VOIP unified communication system
- One internet line per location, resulting in single point of failure

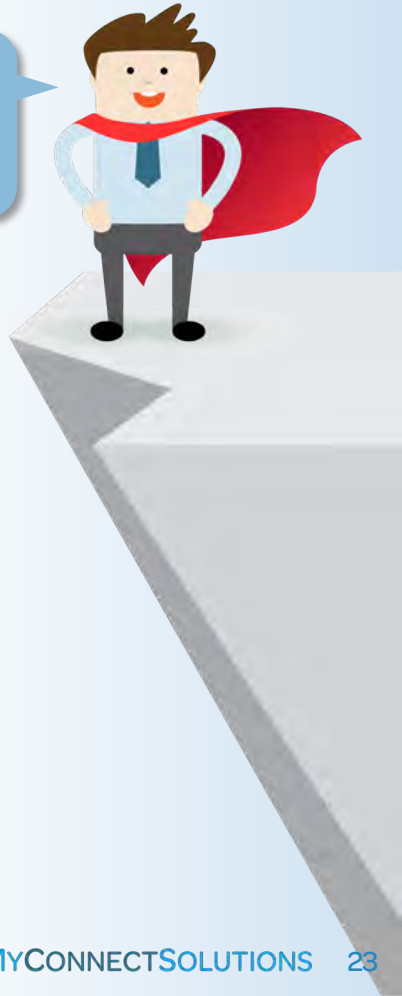
Client Example

ACCHC needed a plan for a scalable, HIPAA compliant network infrastructure that would also reduce their telecom bills.

Step 3: Embrace the Future

What did you learn from the maturity model?

Here's what your future could look like:
A Holistic View of HIT



IT Design & Planning

Business Continuity

Cloud Computing
(Digital records and implement EHR capabilities, being able to store information offsite)

Call Center & Unified Communications

Network & Cyber Security

Live Help & NOC

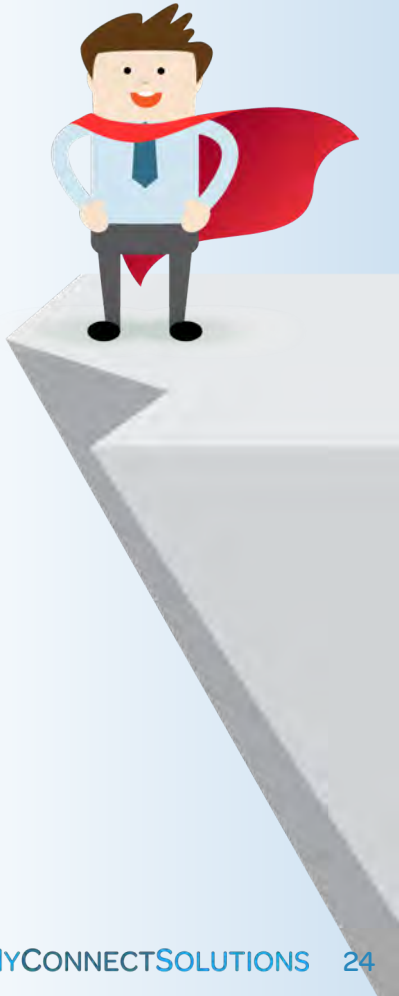
Step 3: Embrace the Future

Where to start?

- Low hanging fruit?
- Highest priority? Greatest need?
- Complete overhaul?

Considerations:

- Do it yourself (DYI) vs Managed Services
- Resource or budget constraints
- Best practices



Step 3: Embrace the Future

For Ace Community Health Care, addressing the network and call center / telecom issues were the biggest priorities.

They began with a vision and plan for a scalable, HIPAA compliant network infrastructure that would also reduce their telecom bills. The new design included built-in survivability and disaster recovery, which guarantees the FQHC has backup, full end-to-end security, and is compliant with HIPAA Rules and Regulations.

Once migrated onto the Unified Communication System, ACCHC has upgraded both their network, security/firewall and phone system to the newest technology.

Client Example

After migration:

- Their locations are connected via one secure, seamless private network
- The connection is fast and reliable
- The IT staff is able to maintain the infrastructure because there is one vendor (versus multiple) to coordinate
- Additionally, the new network unified communication infrastructure will save ACCHC 30% on their annual costs.
- Because the CFO broke from the status quo, she became ACCHC's Health IT hero!

The Hero's View of Health IT

The Hero's View of Health IT

Begin your journey to modern technology for your health center.

IT Design & Planning

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digital records and implement EHR capabilities, being able to store information offsite)

Call Center & Unified Communications

Network & Cyber Security

Live Help & NOC

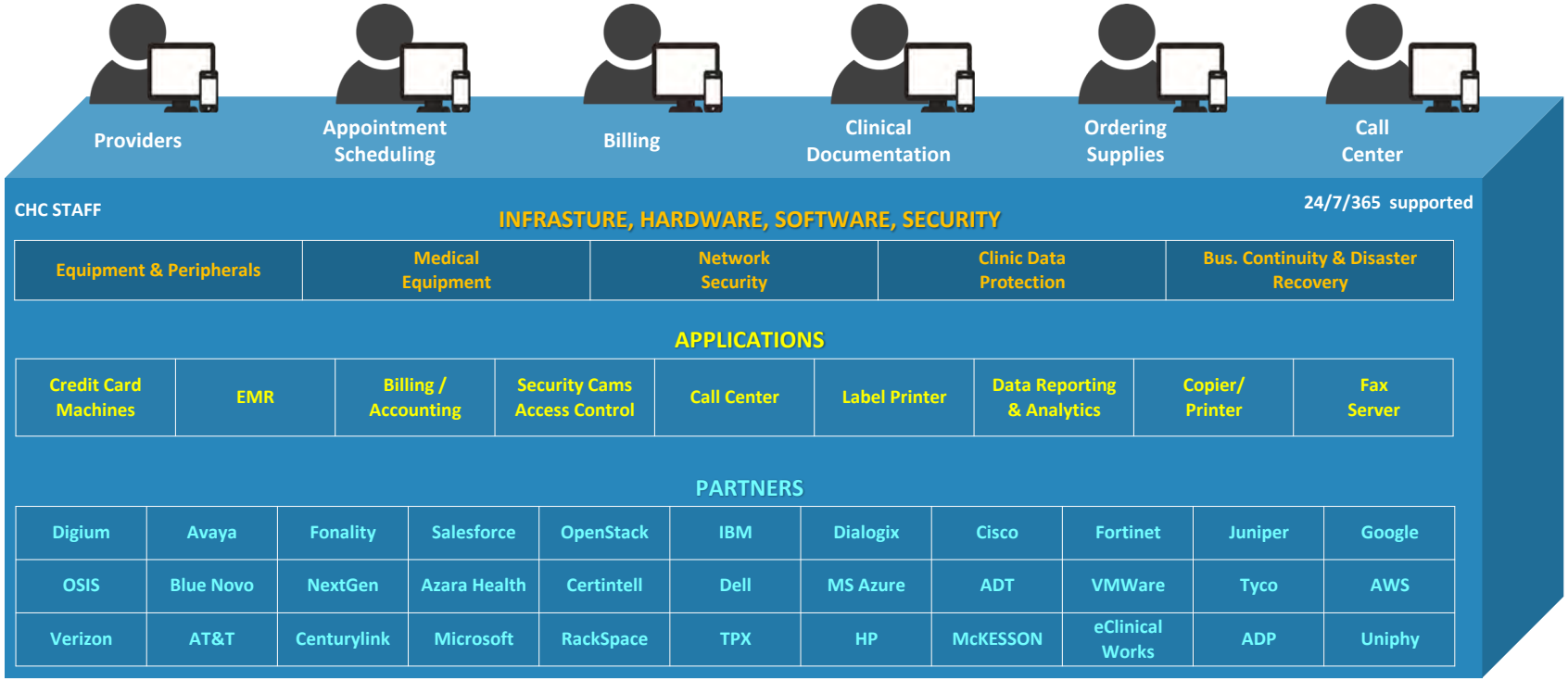
IT Design and Plan

Forward-thinking IT heroes embrace technology that allows providers to engage and care for patients, without worrying about latency issues, outages and cyber attacks.

They ensure that design requirements are business and patient oriented and meet demands for continuous operations. Often this requires insight and expertise from resources with a broad range of experience in many disciplines, like:

- Business process improvement
- IT infrastructure design and architecture
- Capacity planning and management
- Cloud technologies and hosted solutions
- IT security
- Business continuity (Backup, Disaster Recovery)

IT Design and Plan



Cloud Computing

Cloud computing cuts the high cost of hardware and capital expenditures.

Electronic health records, analytics, cyber security depends on a solid, reliable network to operate appropriately and efficiently to help providers and administrators perform their tasks and deliver quality care. Patients are becoming more accustomed to the speed and convenience of apps, smart phones and faster networks. They also expect that their health care information is private and protected. For these reason, health centers are adopting towards cloud-computing.

Health care practices want easily managed, high-performing infrastructure solutions that will also enable them to keep their tight IT budgets intact.

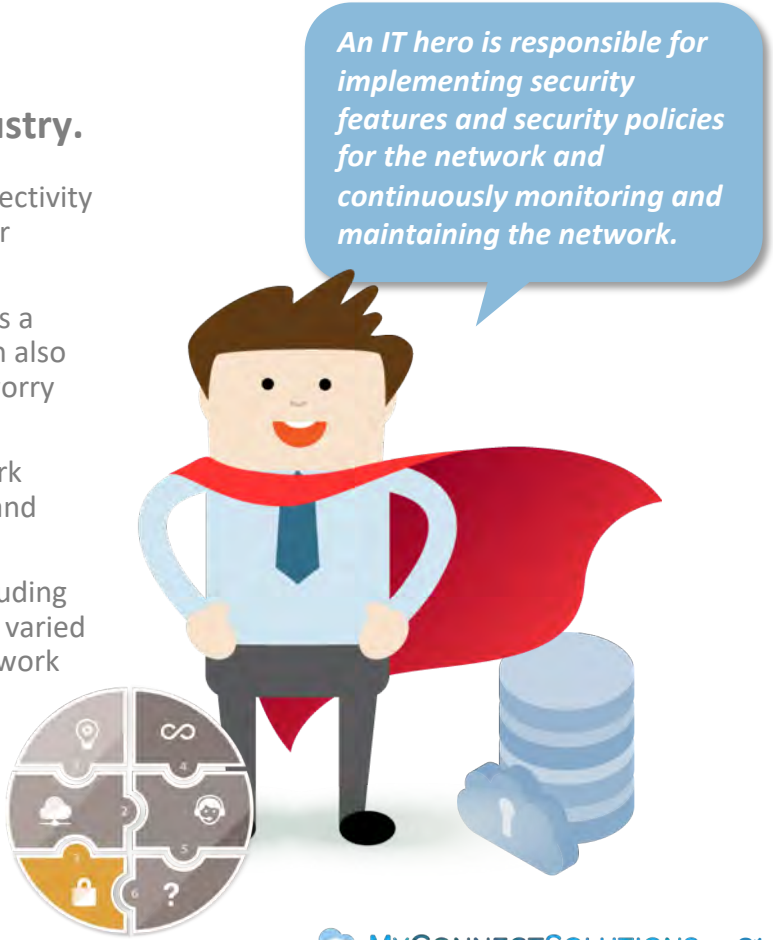
Cloud-computing is one approach to storage and compute infrastructure, where staff could access their tools tools, programs and data using the internet as the conduit. More and more FQHCs use hosted or cloud services to add value to their operations. This trend will only continue to accelerate in the healthcare industry over the next few years.

IT heroes are able to divert funds into other operational areas to create a robust health IT infrastructure. Additional benefits include scalability, flexibility, and reliability, and security.

Network & Cyber Security

Health care data remains the most vulnerable of any industry.

- When implementing health IT infrastructure, it is important to meet connectivity requirements and prioritize patient safety and security, by protecting their privacy and health information.
- IT heroes has a clear understanding of their connectivity needs and selects a network carrier that works the first time every time. The network solution also allows the organization to open new locations faster, without having to worry about availability and CTF/USAC eligibility.
- Additionally, IT heroes constantly analyze the existing IT control framework (both hardware and software) to identify vulnerabilities to cyber threats and attacks.
- Network infrastructures can include numerous pieces of hardware — including routers and cables — and software and network applications that include varied operating systems and firewalls. Network infrastructures also include network services such as internet connections.



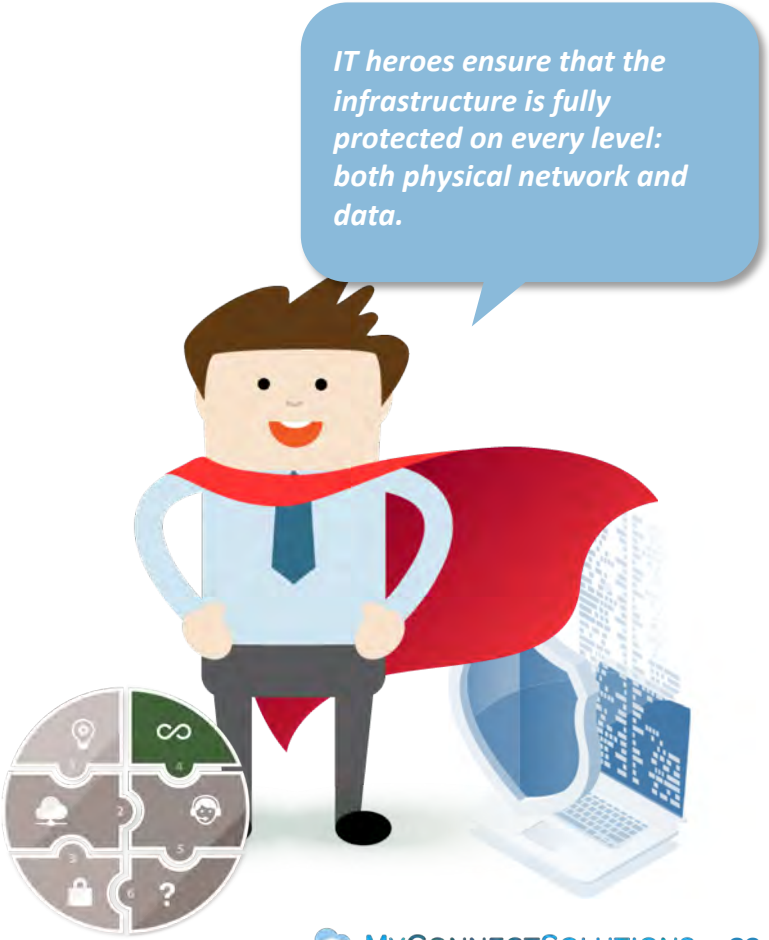
Business Continuity

FQHCs face disasters that may occur in many forms – from Mother Nature's fury to malware or an employee who accidentally deleted important files.

All of these can cause varying degrees of disruption to a business. Regardless, getting back to "business as usual" quickly and with 100% recovery is critical to your business and your employees' and patients' livelihood.

An IT Hero would develop a plan that addresses compliance requirements, and prepares and equips the employee to take action before and during a disruptive incident.

The hero would also ensure that the infrastructure on every level: both Physical Network and Data, is protected and backed up so that the staff is able to "get back to the work" of patient care.



Call Center / Unified Communication

Traditional telecom infrastructure isn't built to support the constant connectivity and productivity for today's demand.

Whether it is to speak with a physician, schedule an appointment or refill a prescription, patients expect that their calls are picked up immediately. IT heroes implement a phone system or call center solution that route inbound calls to staff who will answer.

IT heroes also recognize that with today's desktop and mobile apps, staff can call, text, chat, video conference, and start interactive online meetings from anywhere. This improves information sharing between different locations greatly, which benefits the patients, when every minute matters.

Call center and unified communications solutions integrate phone, SMS text, video conferencing, instant messaging in a secure and reliable service. Services include hybrid-hosted or fully-hosted services with enterprise-grade features, including multiple auto attendants, unlimited call queues, intelligent skills based routing, and recording capabilities.

Telephone communications are perceived as slow and rely too heavily upon automation, resulting in negative feelings. Patients want to be set on a positive path or they will look for another provider. Updating or upgrading the telecom infrastructure will increase patient satisfaction and retention.

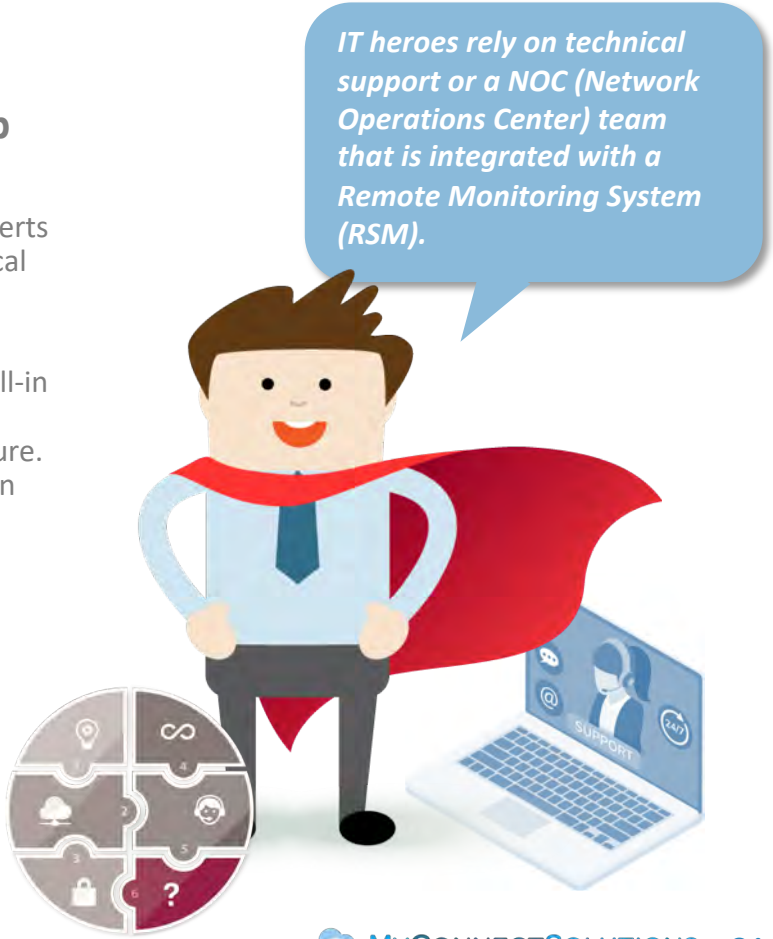
Live help / Tech support

IT Heroes make sure that the health IT infrastructure is up and running smoothly at all times.

Simultaneously, they would rather their staff spend less time on monitoring alerts and more time on other projects. To accomplish this, IT Heroes rely on technical support or a NOC (Network Operations Center) team that is integrated with a Remote Monitoring System (RSM).

Instead of hiring additional staff, a NOC team is a more cost effective way to fill-in gaps and ensure mission-critical applications up and running, 24/7/365. NOC team members are certified in the technologies used in a health IT infrastructure. They can resolve server and network problems remotely. Additionally, they can validate and triage alerts with appropriate escalation and deploy preventative maintenance to ensure a HIT infrastructure is expertly maintained.

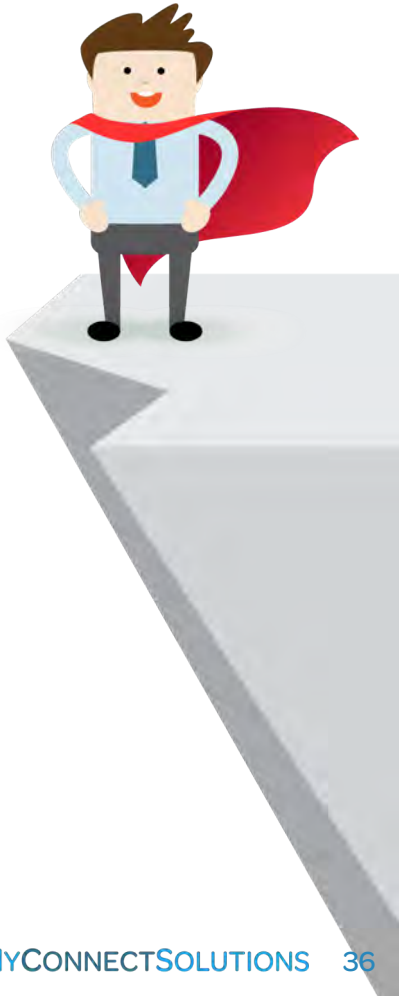
Even IT Heroes need good side-kicks.



MyConnectSolutions

Worry-Free IT Management

About MyConnectSolutions



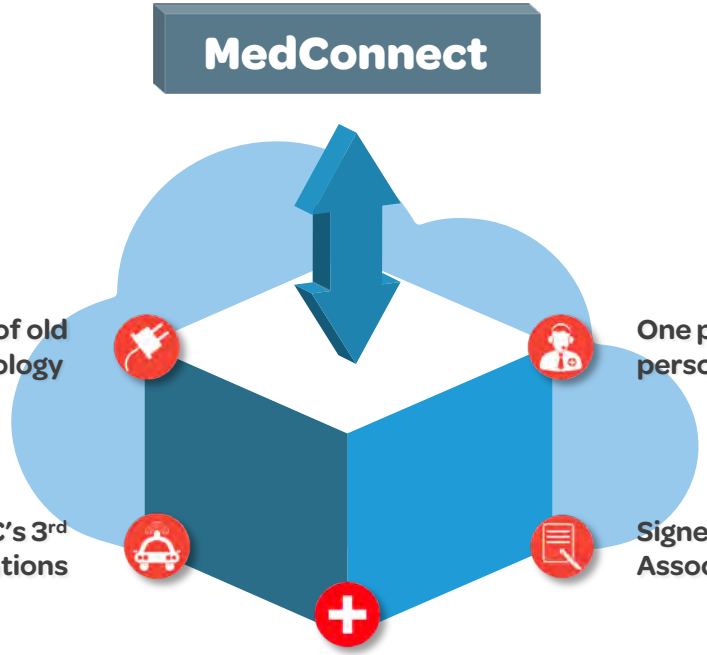
Our Mission is to be the Health Information Technology (HIT) provider of choice for FQHC's, using cost effective & HIPAA compliant IT solutions to meet critical health care business needs and budget.

MyConnectSolutions:

- Is Laser-focus on FQHC needs
- Understands critical discounts available, such as CTF & USAC
- Has a signed BAA (Business Associate Agreement) for HIPAA compliance
- Uses HIPAA E-Too; to insure we are a HIPAA compliant business associate
- Understand HIT applications and EMR's such as NextGen, I2i, ext.
- Understands budget concerns and can save FQHCs up to 40% of traditional IT services

MCS Solution for Community Health Centers

MedConnect



Rapid replacement of old & expensive technology

One point of contact for responsive, personalized service - 24x7x365

Integration of CHC's 3rd Party HIT applications

Signed HIPAA Business Associate Agreement

20+ Years experience with FQHCs

THANK YOU!

For more information about our HIPAA compliant and affordable network and telecommunication solutions, **contact Ivan White at:**

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