

CASE STUDY

Rawlins County Health Center

Atwood, Kansas

Why This Rural Hospital Switched to a Cloud Based Billing and EHR Solution

Rawlins County Health Center is a Critical Access Hospital located in Atwood, Kansas. Before implementing athenaOne for Hospitals & Health Systems, Rawlins was at a turning point with their healthcare information technology: either join the legacy system provided by Great Plains Health Alliance, a multi-hospital system in the region, at great cost, or search for a new vendor. With athenahealth's cloud-based practice management and EHR solution, Rawlins found everything they were looking for—and more—with low startup costs and solid support.

Finding the Right Solution

When Rawlins County Health Center needed a new EHR, they faced a tough choice. They were using a legacy EHR provided by the Great Plains Health Alliance. But Great Plains Health Alliance transitioned to a new EHR, and the new package did not look good to Rawlins. "We kept our options open and looked at several different EHRs," said Destiny Schroeder, information systems director at Rawlins. "It was going to be very expensive up-front for us to switch to the product that Great Plains Health Alliance used, and we would have been required to sign a long term commitment. Plus we were working on tightening up our revenue cycle. When we saw that athenaOne for Hospitals & Health Systems could integrate the EHR and the revenue cycle, we thought it would be a great fit—especially without the huge up-front costs of other systems."

Another advantage of athenaOne for Hospitals & Health Systems, according to Schroeder, is being able to have the clinic and the hospital on the same platform. "Before athenaOne, our clinic and our hospital used two separate products," Schroeder explained. "We weren't able to see patient information like medications or allergies flowing back and forth. Providers had to log into several different systems just to get the information they needed. It's nice having all of that information within one system now."

"Smoother than Expected" Implementation

"Implementation went very well," said Schroeder. "No matter what you change to, you'll have hurdles to get across. But athenahealth did it pretty seamlessly." First, a team from athenahealth visited Rawlins to get familiar with their staffing and workflows. Then athenahealth conducted "superuser" training for key staff members, and spent time on-site during the first two weeks of go-live. "We all felt it went smoother than expected," said Schroeder. "Our providers and staff

At a Glance

- Located in Atwood, KS
- Operates as a Critical Access Hospital (CAH)
- Maintains a full-service Emergency Room with Radiology and Laboratory Departments as well as a rural health clinic
- 15 staffed beds

Solution

- athenaOne for Hospitals & Health Systems
- athenaCollector for Hospitals & Health Systems
- athenaClinicals for Hospitals & Health Systems

Issues

- Faced with high up-front costs for new EHR and long term contract
- Difficult to locate clinical and financial performance data
- Patient information not shared between hospital and clinic

Results

- Low up-front costs
- Integrated EHR and revenue cycle and financial management solution
- Smooth implementation with strong support
- Streamlined workflow for staff and providers
- Patient information available in multiple care settings on a single system
- Transparency into clinical and financial data

caught on very quickly. It was helpful that the athenahealth team was right here when we had questions."

When the nursing department encountered challenges with a component of the EHR, Schroeder said that athenahealth's response was swift and thorough. "The athenahealth team got on phone calls with us right away to find a resolution," said Schroeder. "They gave us timelines so we knew exactly what to expect and when to expect it. They've been really great."

Providers Get More Productive

Even though it's only been a short time since go-live, providers are already enjoying a boost in productivity. "The two physician assistants working full time at Rawlins really like athenaClinicals," said Schroeder. "They find it a lot easier than our old system. For example, the medication order entry and verification of medications has been much easier to complete. They can easily see lab orders and results from both the hospital and the clinic."

What's more, Rawlins providers no longer have to finish documentation after patient visits. "They used to do dictation, but now there are very few things they have to dictate," said Schroeder. "They are completing their ER and inpatient documentation on the EHR during patient visits, and they like that. Their workflow has definitely improved."

Streamlined Registration, Billing, and Reporting

The registration staff has also seen a lot of improvements. They especially appreciate athenaCollector's automatic insurance eligibility verification. "With our old system, the registration staff had to manually check insurance online," said Schroeder. "athenahealth's system makes their process much more efficient. It's the same with being able to scan in driver's license and insurance cards. We weren't able to do that before—it was a paper system. With athenahealth, our staff has everything at their fingertips for insurance verification."

What's more, the Billing Rules Engine—a continually evolving database—saves billing staff time by automatically flagging any claim issues so they can be addressed before claims go out. "Our billers really like the hold buckets and having their own worklist," said Schroeder. "They can look through all the claims that need attention. Then they can click on them and work on them. As they get used to the system, they are finding it easier to correct the claims that need attention."

"In our old system, so much of [our reporting] was a manual process," continued Schroeder. "There were some metrics we couldn't even come up with because it was so difficult to get those numbers. With athenaCollector's dashboards and reporting functions, not only can we easily see the information and report on it, we can use that information to better ourselves. Our CEO is excited about that too. She wants to see that information month by month: Are we doing better or not? What are the reasons we aren't? Where can we improve?"

Support that "Makes a Big Difference"

Schroeder appreciates how well athenahealth has supported Rawlins beyond implementation and go-live. "The athenahealth support has been great," she said. "If we have any issue we talk to them. And they stay in communication with us to work through things."

Schroeder said athenahealth's support stands apart from other vendors. "If we had an issue to call in with our previous vendor, it was difficult to get ahold of anybody," she said. "If we left a message, maybe within a couple of days we'd get a response back. There were some things we never got a good resolution or fix for."

Now, Schroeder says, when someone calls athenahealth's Customer Support Center (CSC) they always talk to somebody. "And if we send a message, we always get a response back that they received our message," she added. "We can track our open cases and see where they are, then make a comment or reach back out to athenahealth. athenahealth definitely has a much better process. It makes a big difference."

Moving Forward Successfully

With athenaOne for Hospitals & Health Systems, Rawlins is part of a continually updated network, ensuring that all payer and industry changes are automatically part of the clinical and revenue workflows. Schroeder said, "With all the struggles we face as a small hospital, we need a product like this to help us stay viable and move forward in the future as things change."

And in the current healthcare environment, staying on top of change is essential. "athenahealth is always on top of the newest regulations and guidelines coming out," said Schroeder. "Having all that information where we can see it—in new releases, updated resources in the Resource Hub, and all the clinical and financial data at our fingertips—is very beneficial. athenahealth will help us move forward successfully."



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