

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO A

Fully Integrated EHR for Behavioral Health



REMARKABLE HEALTH





INTRODUCTION

Mental healthcare is fraught with challenges. Since the deinstitutionalization of mental health hospitals in the 1950's, community-based mental health centers have been largely under-funded and under-staffed. Over the past 60 years, various mental health acts were passed to protect the mental health population, allocate funds for research and health services, and drive fairness in treatment.

Mental health caretakers worked tirelessly to provide effective treatment options in an environment where parity for basic services was nonexistent and licensed clinicians and front line staff were severely outweighed in numbers, pay, and resource support compared to other segments of healthcare.

It was clear changes needed to happen. Enter in the Mental Health Parity Act of 2008, the introduction of meaningful use incentives, followed by the HITECH Act in 2009 and the passage of the Affordable Care Act of 2010. In just a few short years, today's behavioral health providers are being offered a greater level of equality and opportunity than ever before. But, there are still challenges.

Providers are tackling a wider range of mental health, human service, and addiction disorders, with growing demand for treatment options. Also, many behavioral health providers did not qualify for Meaningful Use incentives to offset the cost of technology adoption. Those that did are struggling to implement its requirements. All providers continue to struggle with high staff turnover as well as shortages of licensed staff to provide services. Not only are they struggling with finding the staff, they are also struggling with finding ways to do more with less as a result of funding cuts, regulatory and legislative changes, and other external forces out of their control.

It will take many more years for industry changes to be incorporated into the vast behavioral health provider base and their varied business and care models. As of 2012, a provider survey hosted by the National Council for Behavioral Health reported that fewer than 30% of mental health and addiction providers had been able to implement full or partial EHR systems. That percentage has gone up over the last few years, but upfront financial costs and lack of technology staff to implement and manage a system are cited as the biggest challenges to EHR adoption. That means many providers are still on paper. And even more struggle to find an EHR solution that meets their special needs. Many wonder how they can find and afford a system with robust clinical and billing functionality that also offers behavioral health-centric business guidance with investing in technology, managing implementation, training, and support.

Providers are spending too much time trying to solve their business and technology challenges, preventing them from dedicating more time to taking care of and developing new treatment options for the vulnerable behavioral health population.

We all know behavioral health is not the same playing field as the rest of healthcare. And likely, you already know that not all EHR solutions are going to position you to compete in the rapidly changing behavioral healthcare environment. The key to choosing the right EHR vendor is identifying a long-term business partner who can provide behavioral health expertise and solutions that support both your current needs and goals for the future.

This guide will walk you through what to think about when choosing a purpose-built Behavioral Health EHR solution to run your organization.

Barriers to EHR System Adoption

Costs have been cited as the largest barrier to using an EHR solution. The cost of deploying an EHR platform and adding staff to implement and manage technology is a primary barrier for small to medium sized, often non-profit agencies.

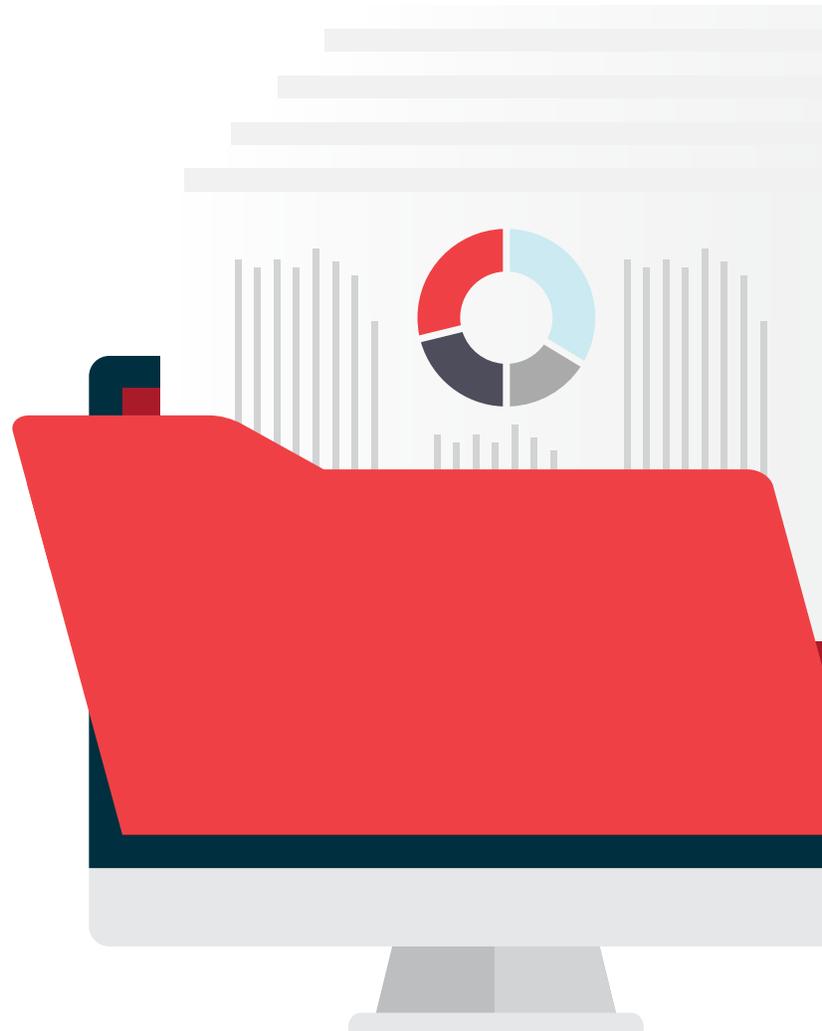
Another barrier is time—both the time to commit to implementation and to learning and using the new system. Workflow changes also take time as staff go through the learning curve toward greater efficiency.

Overcoming Barriers

An EHR system traditionally required a significant hardware investment. Technology advances provide highly secure hosted solutions, eliminating the need to house a server and the related IT operational costs to maintain and upgrade hardware, software, and support staff.

Workflow analysis will identify and streamline inefficient business processes. A comprehensive EHR solution identifies and addresses workflows in a non-disruptive manner, improving staff productivity and billing reimbursements. The cost savings realized by making process changes with an integrated, seamless system offers considerable return on investment over time.

Finally, an effective EHR solution is flexible, intuitive, easy to use, and integrates with your other systems and workflows. This reduces the amount of time needed to learn a new system and provides a single point of data entry and access for referrals, intake, enrollment, scheduling, assessments, treatment planning, and progress notes.





WHAT IS A FULLY INTEGRATED SYSTEM?

A fully integrated EHR system follows the path of client care from scheduling to treatment to reimbursement and finally using care data for reporting and business decisions.



SCHEDULING. You can improve your overall quality of care and efficiency with scheduling as part of your EHR solution. This provides you a centralized location to manage clinician appointments and identify clients who are due or overdue for visits and screenings.



CLINICAL. Everything you need to manage a client's intake, diagnosis, treatment, and beyond the data collected in the provider's office to include a comprehensive client history to help make better medical decisions and provide a more holistic service to clients.



BILLING. An integrated system provides full revenue cycle management to help busy clinicians and administrative staff, bill payers or clients, and increase the likelihood of being paid on the first submission.



ANALYTICS. An integrated solution provides reporting for compliance, outcomes, and data analytics to help you make better clinical and business decisions.

A fully integrated EHR solution offers the full spectrum of care functionality on one platform. Centralized data is accessible between functional teams with everything you need to manage your business from a single dashboard.

In some cases, an EHR system vendor will offer solutions provided by a third party vendor that operates crucial business functions outside the EHR system and the client care process. This lack of communication between system functions can create complications with productivity, maintenance, reporting, and upgrades.

Look for an EHR system that offers an all-in-one solution either through their own technology offerings or in combination with technology solution partners who provide applications that work within the EHR system, not outside of it.

ASSESSING YOUR NEEDS

Here are the most important elements an EHR solution must have to meet the needs of your organization.



PLATFORM FEATURES AND SYSTEM INTEGRATION

While each platform is different, a fully integrated EHR solution should have comprehensive functions for scheduling, intake, clinical documentation, billing, and reporting activities. Additional technology applications that integrate with the EHR solution may also be offered to provide you with options to meet your specific organizational needs. A knowledgeable EHR partner will be able to help you define what combination of solutions is right for you.



CONFIGURATION

The option to customize forms and reports is invaluable to your business operations. And while you may want a certain amount of customization to offer the flexibility you need to address changing needs, it's more important that your core solution be fully featured and integrated. There is a high cost associated with customization, so the less you need to customize, the less expensive the complete solution. An efficient and robust EHR will offer configuration options and rely less on individual customizations. It's also important to note that a 100 percent custom solution is highly unlikely and not recommended.



TRAINING AND ONGOING SUPPORT

Identify vendors who provide expert training and ongoing support as part of their standard solution. You can greatly reduce the time and effort involved in transitioning to an EHR platform through comprehensive training that allows your staff to be familiar and comfortable with the solution. Ongoing support is necessary to ensure quick resolution of issues and questions, and should be offered as part of your solution.



CERTIFICATION

The Office of Health IT Certification oversees national programs for the certification of health information technology. Certification is referred to "ONC" and provides assurance that an EHR system meets the technology, functionality, and security requirements adopted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Authorized Testing and Certification Bodies (ATCBs) make sure that an EHR solution meets these requirements. You should look for vendors who are ONC certified.



MOBILITY

Consider if your clinicians work in the field, in community-based or rural care environments without access to a WiFi connection. Mobility solutions improve productivity by enabling clinicians to enter documentation directly into a laptop, tablet, or smartphone and synchronize notes to the system once they're back at the office or at a secure site. Look for a system that has the capability of aligning with a secure mobile solution now or in the future as new technologies for mobile connectivity emerge.

PROS AND CONS OF AN EHR SYSTEM

PROS



SCHEDULING. You can improve your overall quality of care and efficiency with scheduling as part of your EHR solution. This provides you a centralized location to manage clinician appointments and identify clients who are due or overdue for visits and screenings.



EFFICIENCY. When all of your systems are integrated into a single platform and accessed from one location, you'll be able to process your clients through your system seamlessly and quickly. You'll also be able to pull data for reports and access information in real-time to make better care decisions.



IMPROVED CLIENT CARE. A fully integrated EHR solution gives you access to critical client information in real time, allowing you to make timely and improved care decisions which can result in better outcomes and a healthier client community.



IMPROVED REIMBURSEMENT RATES. With an integrated billing system, you'll be able to streamline your billing and payment functions, ensuring bills are paid on first submission. This will help you manage your revenue cycle and improve reimbursements and collections.



CENTRALIZED DATA. When all of your important data are held and accessible in one central location, authorized users can make timely and critical client decisions about diagnosis and treatment. In addition, auditing and reporting for compliance purposes becomes easier and quicker.



INCREASED SECURITY. Patient information is more secure in electronic form than in paper form. Paperwork with sensitive client information doesn't always get shredded promptly when necessary and is easy to misplace in files. Electronic data can only be accessed by authorized users under strict conditions and controls.



COMPLIANCE / MEANINGFUL USE. Compliance with Meaningful Use objectives is necessary to qualify for incentive payments. And beyond that, compliance will result in better clinical outcomes and offer more research data to help clinicians diagnose and treat clients.



CONS



REVENUE LOSS. If you're still using paper, chances are your billing and payments aren't being managed properly. You could be leaving money on the table in unfilled services and non-paying clients. An EHR can help you manage the entire revenue cycle so nothing gets lost in the process and client accounts are up-to-date and efficiently managed. A robust and streamlined billing process reduces denials created by inefficient documentation and associated coding.



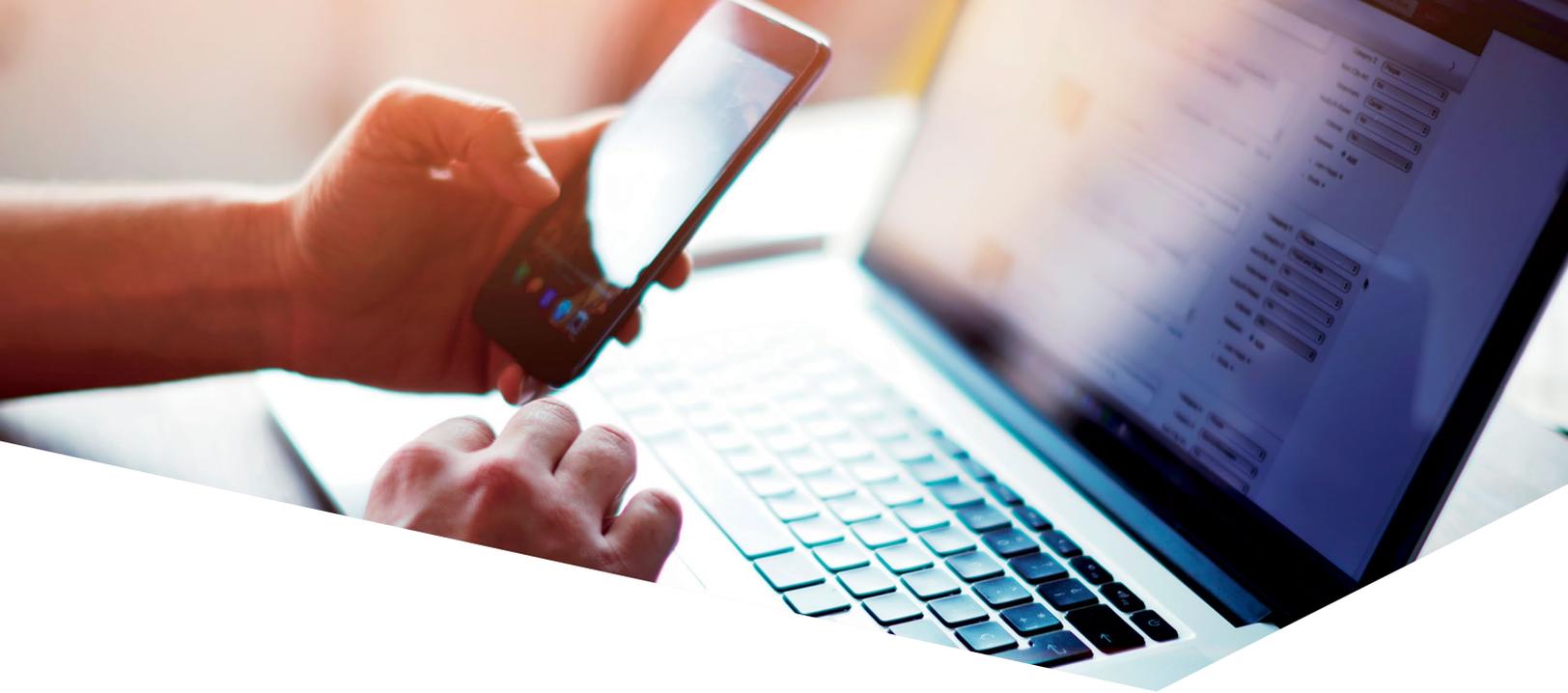
DATA LOSS. There is the risk of data being lost in communication when you're using paper to track and manage your client's care and your business processes. If you use paper or several different system that don't integrate to manage your operations, the risk of data loss is much higher than it would be in a fully integrated electronic solution.



POOR DESIGN OR INTEGRATION. When you choose an EHR solution vendor, you run the risk of opting for a system that's been designed poorly and won't meet staff and overall business needs. In addition, consider the wasted time of your staff and administrative support if your potential isn't researched properly to ensure it meets or exceeds your needs.



LIMITED OR NO SUPPORT. Not all EHR system providers offer ongoing support for their solutions. And in some cases, no support is available. Without support, questions and issues that arise will be hard to handle, and you won't have quick resolution to problems that might impact your clinic's operations and client care. A qualified vendor who offers ongoing support can help minimize the management of staff turnover by offering expert assistance and training to help you ramp up new hires.



HOW TO RESEARCH THE RIGHT EHR SOLUTION

The key to selecting the right EHR platform provider to meet your organization's needs is to ask the right questions.

- ✓ Is your solution ONC certified?
- ✓ How long has your company been supporting behavioral and mental health agencies?
- ✓ Do you specialize in behavioral health and/or mental health?
- ✓ Do you also support physical health specialties? (If they do, this might be a red flag about concerns the vendor doesn't have a deep understanding of the behavioral and mental health category.)
- ✓ Do you have customers in my state today? If not, are you familiar with my state's requirements?
- ✓ How many providers are using your solution today?
- ✓ I have electronic data today. Can you help migrate that data into your system?
- ✓ Walk me through how your system supports a client (lifecycle) from intake to documenting services, to submitting a claim, and ultimately getting paid.
- ✓ Is your system accessible via a hosted solution or do I need to purchase servers to host it at my location?
- ✓ Will my organization get standard enhancements and upgrades with your solution?
- ✓ I'm concerned about maximizing my collections. How does your system make that process efficient?
- ✓ What does the implementation process look like once the contract is signed?
- ✓ What type of training is available to an administrator and our clinical staff?

HOW TO PREPARE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OR MIGRATION

Following are the basic steps you need to take to implement a fully integrated EHR solution.

01 DOCUMENT YOUR WORKFLOWS. It's important to have organized, efficient, and well documented workflows for both administrative processes and clinical work. It's also vitally important that your processes are streamlined and effective. Implementing an electronic solution based on a bad workflow will only exacerbate business inefficiencies.

04 PREPARE STAFF FOR A GREATER LEVEL OF COMPUTER LITERACY. To be most effective, all staff should be comfortable with information technology. To get the most out of your system for the least amount of frustration for your users, everyone should be able to function on a laptop, a tablet, or both.

02 IDENTIFY CLINICAL PRIORITIES, REQUIREMENTS, OR NEEDS. These should be addressed prior to implementation and a plan made to cover any contingencies. To get the full functionality of your new EHR solution, knowing how to handle these situations is important to understand before implementation.

05 PLAN YOUR IMPLEMENTATION WITH YOUR VENDOR. Establishing a roll out plan that align with both the vendor and your goals is important to ensure a successful adoption of the EHR. Considerations such as the scale of the roll out, a phased approach per department, and a reasonable timeline are all important considerations.

03 DESIGNATE A LEADERSHIP TEAM. This should consist of at least one team member from each functional area including IT, front office, clinical, and billing. The strength of your leadership team will be directly impacted by executive commitment. Make sure everyone is on board and your leadership team has the full support they need to be advocates for change.

06 MAKE SURE YOU HAVE A HIGH SPEED INTERNET CONNECTION. This will have an impact on how your system functions, so ensure that your internet connectivity is optimal.

Most importantly, however, you need to prepare everyone for change. Especially for providers moving from paper records to all electronic, the scope of change can create stress for management and staff. By preparing everyone in advance for migrating from the current way of doing business to using a full-scale EHR solution, you greatly decrease the odds of interruption and delays and increase the likelihood of safe, high quality, and efficient client care while meeting regulatory requirements.

Change management follows three phases:

01 DESIGN A CLIMATE FOR CHANGE. Help your staff and management understand what will improve, what life will be like for you and your clients, and why you need to change now.

02 ENGAGE EVERYONE IN THE PROCESS. Communication is a key component of this phase. Make sure to use two-way communication as your staff are experts in your practice's operational nuances and will have valid and valuable input.

03 SUSTAIN THE CHANGE THROUGH ONGOING SUPPORT. Keep focusing on problem areas, solutions, and individual behavior. Be ready to train, retrain, and offer support to quickly address any issue.

CONCLUSION

Implementing any new solution can disrupt business and client care. While behavioral health providers and staff are adapting to change on a day-to-day basis, moving to a fully integrated EHR solution is one change that can be managed with the help of the right EHR vendor.



This e-Book details what you need to look for in an EHR solution, what to consider, and questions to ask. The end result, both of this e-Book and your search, should be to find more than just an EHR. You need to find a behavioral health provider success platform that will cover not only what you do for your clients today, but can scale easily for what you want and need to do for clients in the future.

THE REMARKABLE HEALTH DIFFERENCE

Remarkable Health, partners with our clients to implement our industry-leading provider success platform, a fully integrated EHR system that you can manage from a single interface. We work with you to determine what you need to implement today and what can be added at a later date, as needed.

You get an ONC certified solution with CTIOne, and you can rest assured that we primarily support behavioral health organizations. Our highly selective behavioral health clients trust our deep expertise and extensive experience, and that same dedication to excellent client service, both yours and ours, can be seen in everything we do.

From intake, to documenting services, to submitting a claim, and ultimately getting paid, Remarkable Health supports you every step of the way. We make it easier for you to do what you're meant to do remarkable things happen when people remove obstacles to become a better version of themselves.

For more information, visit www.remarkablehealth.com



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