

The Power of the Network: Efficiencies of Scale for the Community Hospital

Mile Bluff Medical Center in Mauston, Wisconsin is a full-service hospital that serves a vast, six-county region. The center has served south-central Wisconsin for more than 100 years with a commitment to providing compassionate and progressive healthcare. The center proudly serves families from birth to adolescence, and through adulthood, with a 40-bed acute care hospital, two 60-bed nursing and rehabilitation centers, a 12-bed assisted living facility, a 32-apartment retirement community, a state-of-the-art sleep center, and five outreach medical centers.

A UNIQUE CHALLENGE

In the past, Mile Bluff had to work with multiple agencies to find the talent needed to provide the best medical care possible. With so many different departments and clinics to manage, administrators were stretched thin as they struggled to make follow-up calls and compare several different rates whenever they had an important position to fill.

“Every time we had a request, we had to send it out to four or five agencies and wait for responses,” said Cindy Roeske, administrative assistant at Mile Bluff. “Often times it would take two weeks before we ever got a response from them.”

While every healthcare facility has been having a hard time filling clinical positions, Mile Bluff’s staffing issues are made even more arduous since they operate in a primarily rural area.

“We don’t have as many people that want to come here since most of them want to go to the bigger, better-paying places,”

said Roeske. “So sometimes that’s hard for us.”

“The size and scope of the Medefis Network of over 800 agencies allows us to cast a broad net. We level the playing field for smaller, community based hospitals who often times have difficulty sourcing and attracting talent on their own,” said Kevin Koester, Medefis Division Director for the territory. “Not only do we work with the top 10 medical staffing agencies nationally, we also employ many specialized agencies to fill those niche positions a small hospital is going to have difficulty with. If we can’t generate candidates for your open position, I don’t know who can.”

Roeske is confident Mile Bluff missed many opportunities to hire the excellent, qualified healthcare professionals that their patients deserved because of a lack of efficient communication with various staffing agencies. She remembers filling positions being a difficult, cumbersome task that even impacted the center’s finances.

“It was terrible financially because each agency had their own set of rates per hour,” said Roeske. “There was no continuity of pricing throughout the different agencies.”

But the most pressing issue to the Mile Bluff team was that patient care was suffering. They continually ended up without sufficient staff, forcing many employees to work long overtime shifts.

“Without rested staff, patient care suffers,” Roeske said.

IMPLEMENTING MEDEFIS

In 2017, Mile Bluff Medical Center decided enough was enough. They committed to implementing Medefis' Vendor-Neutral Managed Services Program (VN MSP), making everyone's lives much easier — including Roeske's.

“It's been amazing,” said Roeske. “They are very easy to work with and always willing to help wherever they can.”

While some new partnerships take time to implement and show results, Mile Bluff staff members felt the positive shift of going with Medefis right away.

“It has been fast,” said Roeske. “The very first time I used it, within two days we had somebody in that position and we were given about eight candidates to review. There are times that I've put in a submission and by the end of that day we've had a candidate in place.”

Since implementing Medefis, Mile Bluff has recorded:

- Decreased Spending
- Increased Productivity
- Limited Gaps in Employment
- More Candidate Selection
- Improved Agency Submission Times

Instead of paying high, inconsistent rates for agency nurses, Mile Bluff now controls its own rates. While most of the agencies the center worked with required time-and-a-half for overtime pay, Mile Bluff can keep its rate at base-pay plus ten dollars. This savings allows more nurses to be hired, which improves employee morale and patient care.

“Opening positions to a competitive network typically results

in a discounted rate over working directly with staffing agencies,” said Koester. “Many facilities have been paying the same rates for years even though the market may have undergone correction.” Koester added, “Medefis has tools built into the technology to provide national and regional rate transparency for end users. As a result, partner facilities know the current market rates and can set pricing accordingly.”

Since Roeske and her team finished finalizing and cancelling all outstanding contracts, she says transitioning to Medefis has made her job more productive and easier. Instead of chasing agencies to get positions filled, she can post an opening on Medefis and receive a quick response from multiple agencies submitting several skilled candidates on one convenient platform. This peace of mind frees her to focus on other important tasks that keep Mile Bluff's level of care high. Gone are the days of having important positions vacant for weeks at a time.

NEVER GOING BACK

Roeske is happy to put the complications of working with multiple hiring agencies behind her. She says she likes how easy the Medefis web-based platform is to use and how all of the information for each of Mile Bluff's departments is all in one place.

Beyond the system, they are impressed by the superior responses they've received from the Medefis customer service team.

“If ever I have a problem with an agency nurse, I let them know and they quickly get on the ball to try to find somebody to replace them,” said Roeske. “I've had that happen recently and they bend over backwards to try to find somebody to replace them very quickly.”

Implementing Medefis has helped Mile Bluff achieve its goal of consistently bringing in quality healthcare professionals who can help their patients during times of illness, injury, and even wellness. With staffing headaches out of the way, management is able to refocus its time and energy on the community members that depend on the center. In turn the center is now set to deliver high quality patient care for generations to come.