

CELEBRATING THE ABILITY IN ALL PEOPLE

Ability Beyond partners with Netsmart to help people with disabilities live full and rewarding lives

For more than 60 years, Ability Beyond has led the field in supporting people with disabilities by providing person-centered, cutting-edge, cost-effective services to over 2,300 people annually. Working across Connecticut and New York, the organization focuses on developing new technologies and approaches to provide support and opportunities for people with disabilities.

In 2010, Ability Beyond set a five-year goal to double the number of people it serves. However, the organization's leaders knew they wouldn't be able to obtain that goal within the confines of their legacy electronic system.

Lori Ruckel, performance improvement manager at Ability Beyond, explained that daily clinical and administrative documentation

became a challenge as Ability Beyond's client base started to grow. Staff could not be asked to drive back and forth between the office and the field to file their client reports. Additionally, supervisors struggled to hold remote staff accountable, which impacted monthly billing. With fee-for-service payments, if an employee had not recorded his or her session with an individual, payment was delayed at best, and likely lost. Moreover, Ability Beyond was reporting to the State Department of Mental Health based on a multi-tabbed Excel sheet. As a result, human error and negligence sometimes resulted in mistaken reporting.

Ability Beyond knew there were people in

need of assistance from all of its programs, which include residential services, innovative community job training and placement, supported living and recreational and educational opportunities. People with disabilities in Connecticut and New York were relying on Ability Beyond to help them live full and rewarding lives. Something had to change.

That's when Ability Beyond contacted Netsmart.

"The decision to purchase an electronic health record (EHR) is a difficult one," said Ruckel. "You are investing a tremendous amount of money, and it all rests on references and asking the right questions."

After an extensive process, Ability Beyond chose Netsmart's CareRecord™. They liked that it was easy to use, required less training and has a strong foundation for assessments and treatment plans.

"The CareRecord empowers [staff] to take a greater level of ownership over their work."

– Glenna Brown, career development program manager, Ability Beyond

"We attended a user group meeting and met many of the CareRecord clients. We were able to see how users were able to provide input. It came down to the relationship. We feel even more confident about our relationship and feel comfortable with the direction in which the company is going – it is the same direction we are going in. It has been a perfect match," said Ruckel.

Today, Ability Beyond has tripled in size in just under five years, far exceeding its original goal.

"The CareRecord has made managing such a rapid expansion possible," said Ruckel. The conversion from its old system to the CareRecord was accomplished in about nine months. Ability Beyond pulled the data necessary for the changeover and Netsmart was able to set up the system ahead of schedule. Ability Beyond was determined to go live in two states and with all 24 of its programs at one time.

Just before go-live, Ability Beyond had 1,000 of their staff ready and excited to start benefitting from the new solution. Getting everyone ready was easy, with minimal training required. Ruckel explained they created a "buddy system," pairing folks together to make it easier to hit their goal. The approach was a huge success.

Industry

- Developmental Disabilities

Geography

- Connecticut
- Upstate New York

Challenges

- Managing a growing client base

Solution

- CareRecord™
- Plexus™ Hosting

Results

- 25 percent decrease in cost per person served
- 4 more hours per month per supervisor
- 5 percent increase in staff efficiency (one extra day per month per person in the field)
- 60 less payroll hours per week through reduced administrative support

After go live, it took about three months until staff were comfortable with the system.

"We did it!" said Ruckel.

Glenna Brown, career development program manager for Ability Beyond is a regular user of the solution.

"It saves us an enormous amount of manual work," said Brown, noting the benefits of the CareRecord, which includes an interface with the organization's human resources information system that helps Ability Beyond map its staff to the programs and clients they need to access in the system.

Additionally, management is now more aware of what is going on with remote staff members' caseloads.

With a CareRecord, supervisors can see in real time what steps have been taken with each individual and what needs to be done next. It has reduced the number of people who make extra trips to and from the office to deliver billing notes, resulting in more time in the field.

Since staff now inputs service entries daily, at the end of month the records are accurate and Ability Beyond can get paid faster. Reporting is also more accurate and timely.

"For the career services department, the state looks for a benchmark of two hours of face-to-face service time per client per month. Before the CareRecord, this requirement would have involved a separate spreadsheet that needed to be updated manually in order to track this and no one was able to find the time. Now, a quick report can give us the information we need to ensure we are providing those hours," said Brown.

She continued, "Staff is responsible for billing \$5,000 per month each. This was tracked on a separate spreadsheet that, like the other spreadsheet, no one had time to maintain and there were high error

rates. Now, a report can be run to show exactly what has been billed and staff members can track where they are personally with this goal. It empowers them to take a greater level of ownership over their work."

Ability Beyond chose to be hosted by Netsmart's Plexus™ Hosting service. Because the CareRecord is internet-based, clinicians can log in anywhere there is Internet access. Brown says staff can meet a client at Starbucks and still securely maintain

paperwork. The organization is using Netsmart's new mobile system for iPad®, tablets and smartphones, too.

The numbers are striking.

- The CareRecord has contributed to a **25% decrease** in cost per person served.
- Supervisors now have **four more hours** per month available to focus on the needs of the staff instead of doing paperwork.
- Staff efficiency has **increased by 5%**, giving them one extra day per month, per person, in the field to support clients instead of doing paperwork.
- Ability Beyond has saved **60 payroll hours** per week through reduced administrative support.
- Training on the CareRecord takes **87% less time** than training with their previous EHR. This means that for any new hire, they are productive out of the gate.

"It is hard to pull non-profit organizations into the 21st century, but you have to do it," said Ruckel. "Our organization, like many that I am sure Netsmart works with, is so spread out. We're not in one building, answering one phone, using one computer. We are in the field, meeting our clients where they are at. We knew we had to make it more efficient for our staff so we could help more people. That was our vision. That's Netsmart's vision, too." ■

CareRecord has contributed to a 25 percent decrease in cost per person served.

Hear more from Ability Beyond: WWW.NTST.COM/VID/ABILITYBEYOND

You can hear more about Netsmart's clients by visiting WWW.NTST.COM/HEAR-FROM-CLIENTS

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