

HIMentors Helps Ohio Healthcare System Migrate to EDMS



As Phase One of a migration to an electronic document management system (EDMS), HIMentors developed a comprehensive solution to the paper records storage needs of Mercy Health Partners.



Introduction: Improving HIM processes and services

Mercy Health Partners, part of the Catholic Healthcare Partners group, is a multi-facility healthcare system serving northwest Ohio. Mercy recently began automating its health information management processes and migrating to an electronic document management system (EDMS) to improve HIM processes and services; provide more efficient and cost effective staffing; and have better internal control of medical record information. As phase one of this process, the growing volume of paper record storage had to be addressed before implementation of the EDMS could be achieved as phase two.

Mercy recognized this would be an intensive time commitment and that additional expertise in electronic document management and record archival techniques would be needed. Mercy's Deborah Youngblood, corporate vice president for net revenue, retained the services of HIMentors, a health information management consulting firm led by national health informatics industry expert Darice Grzybowski, MA, RHIA, FAHIMA, president, to serve as prime contractor and to supervise the project team.

Situation: Records volume, storage cost increasing

The challenges Mercy faced as it began to journey towards an electronic health record (EHR) included the following:

- The computerization of hospital records was increasing the volume of paper documents created.
- Paper and older archival records were stored within the facilities and via external outsource firms at approximately 40 locations.
- Mercy Health Partners has a proactive records retention policy of 20 years for children and 10 years for adults that added to the anticipated demands on its health information management system.
- Previously implemented steps and installed equipment that were part of a migration plan to a full EHR had not met clinician needs for overall documentation, the legal health record output and format, and the ability for rapid access from multiple locations simultaneously.
- Physical limitations on space and the expense of construction prevented placing EDMS scanning and work processing areas at individual facilities.

- Mercy Health Partners received notice from one third-party storage vendor that annual service fees would increase 500% over the next year.

Action: Focusing on attributes that fit

Based on over 25 years experience in health information systems and hospital administration, Darice Grzybowski of HIMentors knew it was important to develop a solution that was right *strategically* for Mercy. The solution could not be focused only on short term cost savings or shortcuts in processing that might jeopardize the integrity of the medical record or HIM department processes. The solution also had to fit seamlessly with Mercy's overall, long range strategic IT plan and earn the buy-in of the clinical and financial staff.

Solution: Onsite facility meets multiple needs

HIMentors considered three potential paths for the archival records storage solution: a 100% onsite solution staffed by Mercy personnel, a 100% offsite solution and an offsite solution managed by a third-party records vendor but staffed by Mercy personnel.

HIMentors offers your healthcare system these specialty services:

- HIM Operational, Organizational & Productivity Assessments
- Strategic Planning & Electronic Document Management Implementation
- Best Practice Analysis
- Revenue Cycle Management & Process Improvement Projects
- Workflow Analysis & Redesign
- Staff Education & Motivational Speaking

After reviewing project proposals from potential vendors and evaluating the healthcare system's resources, HIMentors and Mercy arrived at a solution that would convert a disused, 15,000-square-foot laundry building into a Centralized Document Management Center staffed by Mercy personnel. The Center would house the EDMS processing and work areas for receipt of centralized records from multiple facilities as well as a high density mobile storage system (HDMS) for traditional records. The centralized work area would be staffed with employees transferred from the three core hospitals who had previously staffed file and record processing areas.

HIMentors based the storage of traditional records encompassing active and inactive records on an HDMS supplied by Central Business Group (CBG), a Cincinnati-based member of the nationwide Spacesaver Group.

Results: Happy requestors, immediate savings

Amy Szymkowiak, RHIT, regional director, HIM for Mercy Health Partners, said of the solution, "I certainly felt like the luckiest health information manager in the world when it was done."

According to the project team's leaders, the positive results were immediate and included the following:

- Mercy staff could locate and retrieve records more quickly, building confidence particularly among requestors on the medical staff, and could better serve patient release of information needs.
- Mercy will save approximately 40% or \$200,000 per year by choosing onsite storage versus third-party vendors.
- The healthcare system regained physical facility space on all campuses for patient care and revenue-generating activities.
- Health information management staff was more productive and happier to work at a modern facility.
- The healthcare system now had the infrastructure to migrate to an EDMS.

Mercy's Szymkowiak summed up her evaluation by saying, "My team couldn't be more excited or proud to be at this new facility and to have this solution performing so well. Darice's ability to organize the project was huge. I look forward to working with her team as we go forward."

To learn how HIMentors can help address your health information management needs, call Darice Grzybowski, MA, RHIA, FAHIMA, president, at 708-352-3507 or email info@HIMentors.com. 

"I certainly felt like the luckiest health information manager in the world when it was done."

— A. Szymkowiak, RHIT, Regional Director, HIM, Mercy Health Partners



HIMentors, LLC
www.HIMentors.com

Phone: 708-352-3507
Fax: 708-352-3705