7 STEPS

to Effective Point of Care Software Selection

Position Your Agency for Success

Home health agencies are facing two major threats to their survival: shrinking reimbursement rates and increased risks associated with additional documentation requirements. Already time-constrained agency staffs must demonstrate compliance with accurate, thorough and coordinated documentation to avoid these risks. As a solution, agency owners and administrators should consider new software solutions to improve productivity and reduce costs in order to position their agencies for success. Whether your agency is looking for its first Point of Care solution or thinking about switching from one product to another, you first need an easy-to-use process that saves time and ensures success.

> Frame your software search by identifying the specific business challenges or clinical issues the agency needs to solve.

Step 1: Identify the agency's needs

Frame your software search by identifying the specific business challenges or clinical issues the agency needs to solve. While this may seem obvious, many organizations do not address this question until midway through the search process. Knowing which challenges or issues you need to solve at the beginning will save time and money, both during your search for a Point of Care solution and its implementation. Here are two examples of clinical and business challenges one may encounter at an agency:

Challenge: Clinicians submit nursing notes late, or they submit notes with errors because visit notes are completed too long after the visit.

Suggestion: Compare how each system empowers clinicians to complete documentation at/near the Point of Care.

Challenge: Staff struggles with typing HCFA 485s due to legibility or deadline issues in clinician-submitted OASIS forms.

Suggestion: Compare options for integrated Point of Care, QA and billing; look for solutions that will automatically generate a HCFA 485 from the OASIS to prevent legibility issues and reduce processing time.

"Software cannot solve all human resource issues, nor can it change the fundamental elements of providing care in the home. However, the ideal software should be easy to use, while expediting agency collaboration, efficiency and workflow," said Felix T., Administrator. "We knew we needed a solution that integrated Point of Care with billing, scheduling, and communication features so that we could use one service for our entire organization."

Step 2: Learn from clinical staff and build a team of decision makers

According to Forrester Research, 76 percent of American online buyers consider advice from other consumers before buying. Home health's very fluid

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work environment makes it easy to benefit from others' experiences. Talk with peers, employees, contract staff and/or a consultant, as they can share their experiences with various systems. Send an e-mail to staff requesting feedback or schedule a staff meeting to gather their free product intelligence. This will likely yield several results:

- a team that feels included in the decision-making process

- real-world reviews of various systems

- additional products and features to consider

Build an interdisciplinary team with a mandate to drive both the decision-making and implementation process. The size of the team depends upon the agency, i.e., small agencies may opt for a team of 1-3 people, while larger agencies should pick one person to represent each discipline and/or agency function (e.g., billing, QA). Some agencies choose to make these committees more advisory in nature, and others use the committee to drive final consensus.

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"Our agency created a Committee of the Whole to make a decision on our software selection," said Steve W., Administrator. "We knew that having all groups and levels of the agency represented on the committee (nursing, billing, scheduling, back office administration, QA, coding, and others), as well as getting buy-in on the software purchase decision on the front-end, would encourage everyone to be invested in making that decision a success. We took software suggestions from many sources."

Step 3: Search online for credible solution providers
Start by typing "home health software" into Google or Yahoo. The results on the first page, particularly the top five natural search results, or non-advertisement results, tend to be the most credible resources. Search results that have shading behind them – usually the first three on the page – are advertisements.

Additionally, consider searching for software reviews in online search engines and in social networking sites like Facebook or AllNurses.com, a community of home health nurses at http://allnurses.com/home-health-nursing/.

Finally, search in software vendor directories to review each solution provider's online presence:

- Texas Association for Home Care & Hospice Home Health Buyer's Guide: http://tahc.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=296

- National Association for Homecare & Hospice Vendor Mall: http://www.nahc.org/Tango/VendorMall/VendorMall.taf?function=cat&cat=COMPTR

- Business.com Directory: http://www.business.com/directory/health_care/home_health_and_long_term_care/home_health_care_software/

> **Use the checklist on page 4 to create a fair "apples to apples" comparison between point of care software providers**

Step 4: Create a standardized list of questions for software demonstrations
Work with the agency's interdisciplinary team to prepare a standardized list of questions to ask each software provider. (See checklist on page 4.) This also creates a fair "apples to apples comparison" document to use after demonstrations to help you reach a final decision. Work collaboratively with the software solution salespeople; begin each demo by explaining the specific issues/features you would like to see demonstrated. In addition to to sparing you excess time and frustration, this preparation will create a more focused and effective demonstration for the agency.

Step 5: Understand the true "total cost of ownership"

Calculate the total cost of ownership to the agency – not just the initial "sticker price." Are there

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any hidden or "extra" fees? Also, account for the current costs that will be eliminated by the purchase of a new solution. What initially appears to be the most cost effective solution may, once the total cost of ownership is calculated, be more expensive for your agency.

For example, when comparing the total cost of Web-based vs. client server systems, consider the total cost of choosing each type of solution:

- Will the agency need an I.T. person?

- How will the agency update software?

- Where will the patient data be stored in case of a disaster?

- How can technical support help in case there is a problem?

"Using a Web-based solution, my agency's data was protected when my office was destroyed during Hurricane Ike. This type of solution enabled me to run my agency and care for patients in the storm's aftermath," said Lora M., RN DON, Administrator.

Step 6: Check finalists' references thoroughly

Make the most of this opportunity to speak with your peers. If used wisely, this step can be very beneficial to the selection process.

- Use the standardized list of questions from the search process to focus the conversation with references.

- Only accept references that have used that company's solution for at least one year.

- Discover the biggest benefits to the agency's daily practice.

- Ask what good, and bad, surprises were discovered. Inquire about technical support and training experiences to benefit from "lessons learned."

- Compare your peers' answers with the salesperson's answers.

Step 7: Select a long-term business partner

Remember, this is more than just a vendor selection. Select a real solution and a business partner for the long term that demonstrates a commitment to honesty and transparency. Look for a track record of regulatory compliance, product innovation and robust technical support and training. Selecting a software partner that meets these criteria will enable agencies to succeed in the challenging home health environment.

Selecting the best Point of Care software is one of the most important decisions for any home health agency.

It affects your communication, collaboration, accuracy, readiness for survey, and even your bottom line. Not all software solutions have the same features and capabilities. Use the helpful checklist on the next page in your research, and find the best solution for your agency.

Questions to Ask Point of Care Software Providers	SOLUTION 1	SOLUTION 2
Are unlimited users and unlimited upgrades included for one price?		
Are Traditional Medicare Eligibility Checks conducted automatically on patient intake and each week of the episode?		
Is the software a complete, Web-based point of care solution for all clinical disciplines?		
Are new therapy documentation requirements managed by the software?		
Are all clinical forms included (OASIS, SN, PT, OT, ST, MSW, HHA)?		
Is Medi-Span drug/drug, drug/allergy screening included?		
Does the software include an intuitive and real time dashboard included to monitor key agency metrics?		
Does the software offer secure submission of claims to all FIs & insurance companies via the Internet?		
Can the software automatically consume and post ERNs in minutes?		
Does the software offer easy export of HHCAHPS survey data to approved survey vendors?		
Is the software Apple iPad enabled to make point of care easier?		
Does the software offer simple & fast scheduling of entire episodes for all clinicians?		
Does the software integrate OASIS / HCFA 485 seamlessly?		
Can the software calculate an HHRG during OASIS review?		
Are OASIS checks included to speed your QA process?		
Does the software integrate quick references such as an ICD code lookup?		
Can physicians use e-signatures for physician orders and e-referrals?		
Does the software enable Care Plan Oversight (CPO) tracking and billing?		
Is onsite training for your entire staff (administrative and clinical) included?		
Are there ongoing training opportunities both in person and on the Web?		
Is phone-based technical support available at least 12 hours every business day?		
Will the software company provide at least two references of agencies with similar size and demographics?		
Has the software company launched new features in the past six months? If so, what are they?		

Kinnser Software, Inc. is the complete online Point of Care, administrative and billing home health software solution delivering clinical and business results to its clients. Hundreds of home health agencies and therapy companies nationwide use Kinnser's SaaS (Software as a Service) solutions every day to increase revenues, decrease costs and improve care collaboration. For more information about the complete home health software solution, visit www.kinnser.com or call toll free 877.399.6538.

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