



Revolutionizing RCM: Transforming Processes Leads to Billing Wins for a Behavioral Health Organization

CASE SUMMARY:

WellStone is an established behavioral health organization that has been serving the North Alabama community for more than five decades. It was founded in 1969 as the Huntsville — Madison County Mental Health Board.

After a period of significant growth, WellStone is now the area's largest behavioral health provider, with an annual operating budget of \$20 million, more than 400 employees, and 12 facilities. In a typical year, the organization serves about 13,000 clients. However, it had continued to conduct certain aspects of its operations — including areas that were critical to revenue cycle management — as if it were still a much smaller company.

This prompted WellStone's CEO, Jeremy Blair, LMFT, to contact SimiTree Behavioral Health to request a detailed assessment of the organization's entire revenue cycle management efforts.

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Elishia Hill, Billing Manager, Wellstone

ABOUT THE CLIENT

WellStone is a non-profit community organization that provides a wide range of services for children, adolescents, adults, and seniors whose lives have been impacted by mental health concerns and substance use disorders. WellStone provides care on a sliding rate scale, with discounts based on family size and income. No patients are ever denied services due to an inability to pay.

The Problem

No one at WellStone questioned the diligent efforts of the organization's financial team. But they were struggling to capture accurate data in a timely manner. As a result, the reports they generated were not as reliable as they needed to be. For example, the company could not identify its current accounts receivable status with absolute certainty.

This compromised the ability of WellStone's leadership to make informed business decisions. It also led to regular denials from insurance companies that had been billed for primary care services.

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As Hill's comment illustrated, WellStone's challenges involved inefficient processes and subpar optimization of their electronic health record (EHR) system.

To address these concerns, the SimiTree Behavioral Health team conducted a thorough revenue cycle management (RCM) assessment. This effort included in-person interviews with all WellStone personnel whose roles contributed to any aspect of the revenue cycle.



The Result

“One of the big things that SimiTree helped us with was getting to bill quicker,” WellStone Finance Manager Nicole Mauk said. “Some of our new programs require very specific data, but we didn’t have a formal way of collecting that data.”

SimiTree Behavioral Health’s efforts in this area focused on both process improvements and technological solutions.

“They helped us implement an accounts receivable console within our EHR,” Hill said. “We also adjusted our reason codes. Now, we can look at claims better. We can easily view dates and times, rejection codes, and other data without having to look at individual payers.”

SimiTree Behavioral Health also helped WellStone implement changes that made their clinical documentation collection efforts more efficient. These upgrades made the process less time-consuming for clinicians while also improving the veracity and accessibility of this vital information.

“We identified what information we needed to collect and where we needed to see it,” Mauk said. “Then we worked together with SimiTree Behavioral Health to create new systems from the ground up.”

In addition to promoting more efficient workflow and more thorough documentation, the SimiTree Behavioral Health RCM assessment also improved the WellStone team’s faith in the results of their efforts.

“We feel more confident that our revenue numbers are accurate,” Mauk said.

“We trust our reports more now,” Hill added.

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