

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 \$39 million, nearly 475 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 smaller organization.

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

ABOUT THE CLIENT

WellStone is a non-profit community organization that provides a wide range of services for children, adolescents, adults, and seniors who are impacted by mental health conditions and/or substance use disorders. WellStone provides care on a sliding fee scale, which is determined by family size and income. No one is denied services because of an inability to pay.

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— Eleshia Hill, Billing Manager, Wellstone

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 troubled WellStone's leadership team, which strived to make the most informed business decisions. It also led to regular denials from insurance companies that had been billed for primary care services.

"When we first started billing primary care services, they were all denied," said Wellstone Billing Manager Eleshia Hill. *"SimiTree worked with us to set up new processes, and by the time we were done, we were getting paid for every client."*

As Hill's comment illustrated, WellStone's challenges involved outdated processes and subpar optimization of their electronic health record (EHR) system.

To address these concerns, the SimiTree 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 Chief Financial Officer 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’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 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 to create new systems from the ground up.”

In addition to promoting more efficient workflow and more thorough documentation, the SimiTree 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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