

Case Study: The Nebraska Medical Center

Improving patient safety by developing a credentialing program that keeps vendors in mind



The Nebraska Medical Center is a nationally ranked, research and academic medical center located in Omaha, Nebraska. The 627-licensed bed hospital is Nebraska's largest healthcare facility and employs more than 4,900 employees. For 2012 and 2013, it has been ranked the No. 1 Healthcare Facility in Nebraska by *US News and World Report*.

CHALLENGE

Even though The Joint Commission didn't recommend credentialing non-employees in 2008, the hospital's forward-thinking Compliance Department read the handwriting on the wall and thought it was important for vendor representatives to meet the same immunization and credentialing requirements as its employees. This information would help the hospital improve the safety and security of its patients and employees, as well as prevent infections.

The Nebraska Medical Center originally tried to develop its own vendor credentialing program, but had limited success. Vendors were supposed to check in at the Purchasing Department when they entered the hospital, where staff verified that they had the appropriate immunizations as well as an appointment, and then issued them a temporary badge. However, the process was time-intensive, and a number of representatives didn't follow the procedure. Why? Because with the Purchasing Department located two city blocks away from the nearest hospital entrance and four city blocks from the farthest entrance, it simply wasn't convenient.

SOLUTION

The hospital decided it needed a proven vendor credentialing system and selected IntelliCentrics' Reptrax™ system. The hospital was looking for a credentialing program that would be less of a burden to both the hospital staff and vendor reps. The team reached out to other hospitals in the region and learned that two other hospitals in Omaha were already using Reptrax. In addition, four Iowa hospitals agreed to use the same system.

“The most important thing is for hospitals to keep the vendor in mind when creating a credentialing program. In fact, it is important for anyone who manages this type of program to sign up as a vendor so they have a better understanding of what the vendor representative experiences.”

**- Bob Ruis, Purchasing Manager
The Nebraska Medical Center**

“Our goal was to create a safer, more secure environment, which only happens when everyone participates. That’s why it was important to lower any barriers to vendor participation,” said Bob Ruis, purchasing manager for The Nebraska Medical Center. “In addition, having seven hospitals/healthcare systems in the region using one system helped make the credentialing process less burdensome for vendor representatives.”

To ensure the success of the program, the hospital embarked on an organization-wide education program to explain why vendor credentialing was important and asked employees to notify Purchasing if they saw a vendor without a badge. Members of the team also spoke at leadership meetings and held train-the-trainer meetings with managers. They sent a blast email to all staff explaining that employees needed to make sure vendors signed in and were appropriately badged. In addition, the medical center installed 10 kiosks at different locations throughout the hospital to make the check-in process more convenient.

While Purchasing manages the credentialing program, it also works closely with Human Resources and the Compliance Department, since this program impacts the safety and security of not only the hospital’s patients, but also its employees. Reprax facilities have an advantage when it comes to determining best credentialing practices. The Reprax system shows the percentage of facilities nationally that require a specific credential. Before adding a new credential to the system, The Nebraska Medical Center team looks at both the national percentages and whether or not the credential is required by other hospitals in the region. Purchasing also consults with experts in Human Resources if there is a special situation that might require an exception for any credential, such as if a pregnant woman cannot receive a specific immunization.

RESULTS

It’s been five years since The Nebraska Medical Center implemented its vendor credentialing program, and since then, the hospital has truly embraced it. The team uses the

Reprax reports to create monthly benchmarks to determine how many representatives come into the facility each month and how many of them are compliant. In addition, this information provides the team with the documentation it needs to have difficult conversations with vendors who aren’t following the rules.

And while the hospital does not have regular meetings with the other regional Reprax users, Ruis talks to their Accountable Care Alliance partner, another major health system in Omaha, on a regular basis. This helps them stay on the same page and provide credentialing consistency for representatives. When multiple hospitals in the same region require the same credentials, it’s easier for vendor reps to become and remain compliant.

According to Ruis, the most important thing hospitals can do when implementing a vendor credentialing program is to keep the vendor in mind. He recommends to anyone who manages this type of program to sign up as a vendor so they have a better understanding of what they experience.

“Keeping the vendor in mind makes your job easier,” explains Ruis. “In a system that works with them, vendors are more likely to be in compliance and be part of the solution.”

“Our goal was to create a safer, more secure environment, which only happens when everyone participates. That’s why it was important to lower any barriers to vendor participation.”