



Minneapolis clinic seamlessly migrates EHR, cloud hosting over a single weekend, improving security and service from day one

Switching to a new cloud hosting provider can seem overwhelming for healthcare organizations. The fear of a potential loss of records, data leak, or disruption to continuity of care can make it easier to stay with a service that isn't meeting the needs of the practice.

Family Tree Clinic bucked the trend by moving its electronic health record (EHR) hosting to Med Tech Solutions (MTS) in the midst of the pandemic while also engaged in a capital campaign to fund construction of a new site. Not only was the switch effortless, but the practice also easily added enhanced support for its NextGen EHR, IT management, and end-user support, ensuring the clinic was able to manage numerous priorities during complex times. And when Family Tree Clinic moved to its new state-of-the-art facility, MTS was there to ensure that the physical relocation was as seamless as the virtual one.



RESULTS

- ◆ Converted easily to a new cloud hosting provider over a single weekend, maintaining continuity of care with no glitches or delays in service
- ◆ Improved compliance and enhanced data security with 24/7 managed security operations center (SOC) and incident-response and forensic investigation teams
- ◆ Training for key staff to become NextGen superusers provides faster issue resolution and improved patient care
- ◆ Workflow optimization reduces multiple steps in common NextGen processes for improved staff efficiency
- ◆ 24/7 end-user support increases employee effectiveness and satisfaction by eliminating delays
- ◆ Network and application maintenance frees in-house IT team to provide personal assistance to medical providers and staff

SERVICES PROVIDED BY MTS

- ◆ Secure, reliable cloud hosting with managed network operations center (NOC) and security operations center (SOC)
- ◆ Workflow optimization and 24/7 support for NextGen EHR
- ◆ 24/7 support for any network, IT systems, and office applications issues

CHALLENGES

- ◆ Inability to get timely, quality technical support, creating delays and frustration
- ◆ Concern that a security breach could put confidential patient data at risk and significantly impede the ability to provide care
- ◆ Uncertainty as to whether an infected laptop or workstation could log on to the network
- ◆ Lack of collaboration and coaching from the hosting provider, which inhibited the clinic from using many of NextGen's most powerful capabilities

Family Tree Clinic's mission is to cultivate a healthy community through comprehensive sexual healthcare and education.

Their vision is to eliminate health disparities through innovative, personalized sexual healthcare, and education for diverse needs.

Located in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the clinic has operated since 1971. In addition to delivering low-cost, patient-driven healthcare, they provide comprehensive education services for youth and parents throughout the Twin Cities, including to the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard-of-Hearing communities.

Proven step-by-step migration plan results in successful hosting switch with full continuity of care

For more than 50 years, Family Tree Clinic has provided low-cost, patient-driven healthcare and education services throughout the St. Paul/Minneapolis area. As a community clinic focused on reproductive and sexual health, the practice has always sought to provide the best possible care for uninsured, underinsured, working-poor, high-risk, and vulnerable populations.

With a staff of nearly 50, the organization is small but mighty, and has evolved to keep pace with serving those with the greatest need. For example, when first founded, Family Tree catered to many college students; today the focus is more on LGBTQ patients and those with hearing or vision loss.

With flexibility and adaptability as key organizational values, it's not surprising that Deborah Angelucci, the clinic's finance and human resources director, was motivated to tackle a pressing challenge by being willing to make a major change.

The problem—and it was significant—was inadequate support from the company that hosted the clinic's NextGen EHR and provided general IT support. "They weren't responsive to us at all anymore. We would call and end up on hold forever. Then they would call back two days later. It got to where I was worried the hosting company might actually go under," Angelucci explained. Compounding the problem was the fact that, in effect, they had no end-user support for NextGen.

Angelucci knew that choosing a good partner was key to a successful migration. She was delighted to discover that MTS IT services are comprehensive and purpose-built for healthcare.

"I was so happy to learn that MTS could meet all our needs—hosting our EHR and network, end-user support, and especially NextGen support and customization. NextGen has all these great capabilities, but the way we were using it could be a hindrance for our medical providers."

MTS' expertise with hosting and as a certified NextGen reseller was key. "Moving health records from one company's cloud environment to another can be fraught with issues," Angelucci explains. "But MTS had done this before. They had a plan and laid it out clearly to us, telling us about potential pitfalls and how they were going to safeguard against them. We had regularly scheduled meetings where they would explain everything, but basically they did all the work themselves."

This extensive communication provided great reassurance for Angelucci. "I was very confident that switching providers wouldn't be a big deal." And, in

fact, the transition was exceedingly easy, with MTS handling everything needed to configure, deploy, maintain, and optimize the system and operational workflow.

Angelucci describes how things transpired on the go-live date. “There were little things that needed troubleshooting, of course, but nothing major. We didn’t lose data or health records. We didn’t lose time with patients. We didn’t have to close the clinic. Everything to do with the hosting migration went very smoothly.”

Enhanced security helps Family Tree Clinic avoid threats and ease compliance

Protecting confidential patient records from unauthorized use and complying with regulations like those mandated by HIPAA is vitally important to Family Tree Clinic. “We are a small clinic, and I don’t think anyone’s out to steal our data,” Angelucci explains, “but we can be at risk if our host’s site is compromised. In fact, our former hosting company had a ransomware attack after we switched to MTS, and clinics using their cloud were unable to access their medical records for weeks.”

The MTS cloud platform is certified to meet the stringent requirements for the HITRUST Common Security Framework (CSF). This is the gold standard for healthcare organizations who need to safeguard patients’ personal health information and critical practice data. HITRUST certification provides risk assurance for both internal and external stakeholders, including regulators, and eases HIPAA compliance audits.

“There are always new threats and viruses coming out, but MTS continually looks for the best ways to protect our data,” Angelucci says. “And MTS often updates the protections. It’s a whole different level of security than we’ve ever had before.”

Family Tree Clinic’s two-pronged mission—medical care and education—heightens the need for network security. Their educators spend most of their time away from their offices working from laptops. As Office and Technology Manager Jaffa Aharonov explains, it can be hard to rope them in for updates. Equally important, many of them aren’t tech-savvy and may unknowingly expose their computers to viruses. But MTS’ security prevents an infected laptop or workstation from being able to log into or stay on the network.

MTS monitors threats 24/7 from a security operations center (SOC) that uses the latest incident-response technologies. Aharonov describes the relief he feels at working with a trusted partner. “We had an instance recently where it appeared that one of our providers had tried to log in numerous times, the sign of a possible breach. MTS took that workstation off the network right away and alerted us while they researched the problem. It turned out to be a glitch, and





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the workstation was restored within a couple of hours without any problems. The immediate response and resolution to a potential security threat shows me that MTS really has our back.”

Clinic gains in-depth expertise, support, and training on how to make the most of powerful NextGen capabilities

Family Tree Clinic has also turned to MTS for day-to-day solution support for NextGen. Although the practice has used NextGen since 2012, routine employee turnover meant the people with institutional knowledge of NextGen are no longer available. So for the past few years, current users have been operating on their own.

Angelucci explains why that hasn’t been effective. “NextGen has a lot of capabilities, but our folks didn’t have the training or help to make the most of them. And if our staff didn’t know how to do something or thought the software was behaving strangely, they really had nobody to go to.”

She adds, “I wanted to change the narrative around NextGen. I wanted to be able to expand our use of the system, so that it better serves our medical providers right now.” To get there, they needed a consultant who could assess what they’re currently doing and provide concrete advice and training on how to do it differently. “For NextGen support we needed more than, ‘You’re doing it wrong—this is how things are supposed to work.’ We needed explanations of why it’s important to use a feature in a particular way, in order to motivate staff to learn new procedures that will help them be more efficient. MTS is great at this.”

With the complexity of managing the clinic through a pandemic and major relocation, Family Tree Clinic is working with MTS on optimizing NextGen to make the most of its powerful capabilities. Drawing on MTS’ deep NextGen expertise, they are now exploring how to better use the system to meet objectives like shortening visit times, increasing the number of visits, and enabling real-time charting and billing.

Meanwhile, MTS has helped Family Tree Clinic significantly in eliminating workarounds for basic processes. As Angelucci put it, “Because of the way we had set things up, there were a number of things that should have been simple but weren’t. For example, it used to take us about 15 steps to print medication labels—now we can do it in a couple. MTS showed our team how to optimize our use of NextGen so that we’re working much more efficiently.”

Some of the other customizations that MTS provided included configuring Care Guidelines, to show providers at a glance what labs or other procedures a patient is due for, and updating the list of favorite labs. “Making changes like these may seem like small fixes,” says Clinical Operations Specialist Brandon

Jones, “but we were doing so many things the long way, that it added up to a lot of wasted time.”

Customization assistance from MTS helps Family Tree Clinic not only save time but also maintain compliance with legal regulations. For example, the practice participates in the state of Minnesota’s 340B drug pricing program to provide eligible patients with low-cost prescriptions. With MTS’ help, Family Tree Clinic customized a template so that providers could confirm that they asked screening questions—a requirement of the program—in a single click. Simplifying this process increases compliance, ensuring that Family Tree Clinic is able to fulfill their mission of providing high-quality care to patients regardless of their ability to pay.

Direct access to knowledgeable helpdesk professionals 24/7 provides speedy resolution to IT and application issues

Down time in a healthcare setting can be hugely problematic—wasting precious time, preventing staff from focusing on important work, and sometimes delaying patient care. That’s why it was so challenging that Family Tree Clinic had poor support from its previous provider.


As quickly as possible after the hosting switch was complete, the clinic turned to MTS for managed IT services. This includes a 24/7 helpdesk dedicated to keeping devices, the infrastructure, and applications running at their best, with a support plan tailored to meet the practice’s existing and future needs.

Angelucci describes why this matters: “Whenever there are issues, I know I can call MTS and get the problem resolved quickly. That is huge, because we didn’t have it before. That means the world—to know we can keep seeing patients instead of waiting for technology to be fixed.”

MTS is not only responsive about fixing problems that arise; the support team also proactively educates Family Tree Clinic staff on ways they can handle minor tasks in-house. This enables Family Tree Clinic to do things like quickly resetting passwords without the hassle of asking for support.

Aharonov values the ability to do some investigation and problem-solving on his own. “As an administrator, I have access to the active directory, so I can see what tickets are open. With the previous provider, there was a void. No support. With MTS, there’s always support available. But I like having a user interface where I can do some things myself.”

Aharonov appreciates he is building relationships with a small core of individuals at MTS and can turn to them repeatedly. For example, one person from MTS was responsible to set up laptops and ensure documentation was



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consistent and accurate. “It feels very collaborative working on tech issues with MTS, and that means things go smoother.”

MTS assistance before, during, and after clinic relocation helps Family Tree Clinic keep all systems go

Family Tree Clinic benefits from MTS being a national hosting company with a local footprint. During the pandemic, most support and service was provided remotely. But when the practice relocated in November 2021, MTS employees came in and moved the network themselves.

“They literally moved our physical equipment,” Angelucci describes. “Even before construction was complete and while we were getting things set up in the data room, they came onto the new site to make sure the wiring was done the right way and advised where we should put the access points.”

With MTS’ help, when we moved our clinic to a new location, there was literally no downtime. No delay. Everything worked the way it was supposed to. They really took care of everything.”

Another way in which MTS provided mission-critical assistance to Family Tree Clinic pertained to a telephone system change. Although MTS was on board at the time, they had not been apprised of the shift, because the phone provider had not notified Angelucci to do so.

“The phone system conversion was a complete disaster,” Angelucci recalls. “We did it on a Friday when the clinic was closed. By the time the tech who installed the new phone system left, not only did the phones not work, but the computer network was also down. However, MTS jumped in and fixed things very quickly. Saturday, we were open, and they helped us develop a quick workflow workaround, so we could see scheduled patients. And then Monday morning MTS got everything up and running.”

“I was extremely grateful that MTS was able to restore the network so quickly,” Angelucci adds. “It was a huge relief. I fear that if we had been with the old hosting company, it would have been weeks before we would have had a functioning computer system.”

Overall, Angelucci is thankful not only for the range of services offered by MTS, but also the quality. As she says, “Growth is a big part of the mission of Family Tree Clinic. It’s why we moved to a bigger building with more exam rooms. It’s why we’ve hired more providers. To support our expansion, it’s increasingly important that the technology we use functions well. And if things go wrong, that we can resolve them as quickly as possible. I’m thrilled with the service from MTS. They are providing better support than we have ever received.”

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