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As the director of nursing and health services for the Gadsden Independent School District (ISD) in southern New Mexico, Judy Bauer-Creegan has her hands full.

Gadsden ISD is a rural school district that draws students from several communities, some as small as 200 or 300 people. The district itself is about the size of Rhode Island, so driving from one end to the other takes more than an hour.

"We have a little over 14,000 students and 100 percent qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. We see lots of chronic illnesses, such as asthma and diabetes."

What's more, many of the district's students are immigrant children. "That doesn't change how we provide health services to them, because all kids receive equal care," she noted. "But it does change their ability to get medical attention outside of school."

The only health-care services many of these children receive come from Bauer-Creegan's staff, which includes nurses at 22 of the district's 23 elementary, middle, and high schools.

"Our nurses last year saw over 219,000 school health visits," she said—with each nurse seeing 60 to 100 students per day, so having an efficient documentation and reporting system is essential for the district.

Old system was too cumbersome

For several years, Gadsden ISD was using an electronic health records (EHR) system that was not meeting its needs. "It was very hard to query data on the system, and it was very cumbersome to use," Bauer-Creegan observed.

Furthermore, the system was not built with all of the needs of nurses in mind. For instance, when the district's nurses first see a student about an illness or other issue, they perform a SOAP evaluation, which stands for subjective, objective, assessment, plan. This best-practice documentation method is widely used by health-care providers to create a patient's chart—but Gadsden's former system had no easy way to record a SOAP note.

It also did not communicate well with the district's main student database, and it wasn't capable of handling all of the information that Bauer-Creegan and her staff wanted to store in the system.

"We use our documentation system extensively, and we do things with it that a lot of school districts don't do," she said.

For example, Gadsden ISD is on the Texas border, and it is easier for some parents to have their children immunized in Texas, so the district cannot rely on state immunization records to know which students have received which shots. As a result, the district's nurses keep their own immunization records—which they struggled to do with their old EHR system.

"I used to have nurses who were staying until 7 or 8 o'clock at night, trying to put their documentation in," Bauer-Creegan said. Her staff had to create paper records to document some student visits, which made keeping track of each child's full health history a challenge.

Difference is 'like night and day'

Fed up with the shortcomings of this other system, Bauer-Creegan sought a new solution. She discovered the answer in SNAP Health Center, from Professional Software for Nurses Inc. (PSNI) of New Hampshire.

SNAP Health Center is a comprehensive medical documentation platform that manages every aspect of student health data, enabling school health professionals to quickly review a student's history, screening progress, immunization status, and current medications—all from a single location. Nurses can enter immunization records, keep SOAP notes, and record all other necessary documentation quickly and efficiently.

Powerful features, such as in-depth reporting, Medicaid billing, customized form letters, and one-click visit documentation, allow users to analyze student health data and streamline operations in ways that weren't possible before, Bauer-Creegan said. In addition, a partnership between PowerSchool and PSNI enables the software to integrate seamlessly with PowerSchool student information system (SIS), the most widely used SIS in schools.

This integration allows for automatic synchronization of student demographic information, emergency contacts, and health data—ensuring that administrators always have the most up-to-date information at their fingertips, which is critical during a medical crisis.

Gadsden ISD migrated to SNAP Health Center during the 2011-12 school year, and "it didn't take us long to make the transition," Bauer-Creegan said. She and two other nurses traveled to New Hampshire to receive training on the system, and they returned and taught the other nurses how to use it. "It was so easy to use that we were up and running in no time," she said.

The difference between SNAP Health Center and the older system is "like night and day," she added. "It's amazing. We run reports on a regular basis, and I'm able to review each of our nurses' documentation—so I can keep track of how we need to do things better or where we have a problem."

Less time, better service

With the new system, Gadsden nurses are fully immersed in a 21st-century technology-based solution.

"We don't do anything with paper now at all," Bauer-Creegan said. "We keep paper backups for what the state requires us to, but everything is now completely electronic—and we were never able to do that before."

SNAP Health Center has enabled the district to create model templates for registered nurses and health assistants that are very easy to use—saving them even more time.

Staff morale has increased; nurses no longer have to stay late to document their visits; and Bauer-Creegan's annual report to the state takes much less time as well.

"It used to take me a month to sort through all the data in the other system to do the state report—but with SNAP, I'm able to get that done within two or three days," she noted.

Gadsden nurses also have seen an upgrade in their service and technical support. PSNI "knows what a nurse is required to do," Bauer-Creegan said. "So when you talk to somebody, you're not just talking to a technician who has no idea what you do, but you're talking to somebody who knows the software and knows what you need to accomplish—and they know how to get you there."

PSNI employees not only are more knowledgeable, they are also more personable and caring, Bauer-Creegan noted. "I really feel like they care about you as a customer and as a person. It's not just lip service. They'll ask, 'Is there anything we can do to make the software better?' And I usually don't have anything to suggest, because when they find something that needs to be done, they're doing it behind the scenes already."

She concluded: "If we ever stopped using the SNAP software, I would honestly have my nurses mutiny. SNAP Health Center is just so easy to work with."

PSNI™

PSNI is the leading provider of student health software designed specifically for the K-12 school health clinic. For over 28 years our flagship software, SNAP Health Center, has remained the most trusted and widely used comprehensive school-based EHR servicing over 5 million students. Utilizing superior design and hands-on school nursing experience, SNAP Health Center allows schools to achieve better student health outcomes by streamlining workflow, increasing communication, and providing comprehensive health data analysis. With a focus on flexibility and security, districts of all sizes benefit from increased efficiency and reduced liabilities.

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