Case Study

Seasons Hospice & Palliative Care Recognizes Immediate Gains in Productivity by Centralizing Recording and Reporting of Privacy, Security and Adverse Events.

Seasons Hospice & Palliative Care is a privately owned organization with an ongoing passion to find creative solutions that add quality to end-of-life care. Headquartered in Rosemont, Illinois, Seasons has 29 sites in 19 states across the country, all of which offer hospice services, and half that deliver palliative care. Given the organization’s numerous locations and the nature of its services, Seasons Hospice & Palliative Care does business under a wide variety of compliance regimes.

This case study is based on an interview with Debbie Sarantopoulos-Palese, Vice President of Health Information and Informatics Management and Privacy Officer for Seasons Healthcare Management, which oversees national operations for Seasons Hospice & Palliative Care.

COMPLYTRACK™ QUICKLY DELIVERED MORE THAN ANTICIPATED WITH EASE OF USE AND FUNCTIONALITY

Before adopting Wolters Kluwer’s Compliance workflow solution, ComplyTrack, Seasons had implemented another platform to capture adverse events, but as time went on, the organization was looking for a more robust system that would provide reports with more ease of use and greater functionality, particularly with regards to privacy and security. As Ms. Sarantopoulos-Palese explains, “When I joined Seasons, my role as Privacy Officer was brand new, and we did not have a mechanism to capture privacy and security incidents. In implementing ComplyTrack, that’s what I was looking for at first. Today, we’re using ComplyTrack in several ways. We use it for adverse events, to capture some of our non-billable hours associated with various cases and claims, and to track the infrequent breaches of security and privacy. From the compliance perspective, our chief compliance officer uses it extensively as well.”

ONBOARDING WAS SIMPLE AND THE BENEFITS WERE IMMEDIATE

Ms. Sarantopoulos-Palese was instrumental in the acquisition and implementation of ComplyTrack at Seasons. “I used ComplyTrack in my previous job, so when I saw that we needed a solution to help with the capture of adverse events, and compliance and

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Vice President of Health Information and Informatics Management and Privacy Officer
Debbie Sarantopoulos-Palese, Seasons Hospice & Palliative Care

Challenge
With just under 30 locations across the country, the consolidation of data capture and reporting was vital. Separate spreadsheets were simply not sufficient.

Solution
ComplyTrack’s Issue Action Management and Incident Management applications instantly enabled Seasons Hospice & Palliative Care to consolidate and streamline incident recording and reporting.
privacy/security at Seasons, I brought this forward to the organization as an option. It was a very smooth process as far as onboarding the system. We had a multi-disciplinary group looking at it. It was all very positive.” The organization transitioned from what Ms. Sarantopoulos-Palese describes as a “home-grown system,” which didn’t have a lot of ComplyTrack’s functionality to a web based system which can be used by all employees to report incidents. The group saw immediate advantages. “ComplyTrack allowed us to generate reports on the fly, which was a valuable addition. In our old system, we had to write various reports using the program. Now we have a more robust reporting system, we can capture data more easily, and we’re able to electronically collect information so we’re not manually inputting into separate spreadsheets, which was causing certain productivity issues.”

INSTANTLY INCREASING PRODUCTIVITY

Ms. Sarantopoulos-Palese points to productivity as an area that ComplyTrack directly impacted. As she explains, “On the privacy side, all of our locations had to maintain their incidents on an Excel spreadsheet. If they didn’t do it, or if they missed something, then it just wasn’t captured. But today we have various alerts and notifications coming from our internal help desk to tell us if something is missing or needs to be logged from a compliance security standpoint. This means that it’s a lot easier to capture the information and have it available. Then, at the end of the year, when it’s time to report information to the Office of the Inspector General, we have all the site information right at our fingertips. So, we’re able to produce much more with much less effort. It made the process significantly more efficient. It’s all in one place.”

ACCESSIBILITY IS KEY

Hundreds of employees across Seasons use ComplyTrack, and this accessibility is something that Ms. Sarantopoulos-Palese greatly appreciates. “There is an ability for people who aren’t necessarily users to go in and make reports. This ability to log events, and not be a user, makes tracking a lot easier. We’re able to capture all of our incidents, whether they be quality, compliance, privacy, or security, all in one place. And the reporting tool puts the ability to generate various reports in our hands.” Ms. Sarantopoulos-Palese points to reporting as a critical strength. “The reporting tool is probably the one feature I couldn’t live without.” Seasons uses the imported form and activity items to track, manage and complete necessary action steps. We also use it to recall and access historic patient-specific information at a moment’s notice. “There is a process where once someone reports an adverse event, we built the system so that all of the parties that should be on that particular activity are included and can follow up and document in the system.”

UTILIZING COMPLYTRACK TECHNOLOGY TO ENHANCE RISK ASSESSMENT

Using ComplyTrack, Ms. Sarantopoulos-Palese was able to create a template that can be used to assess HIPAA privacy/security risk across the entire Seasons organization. “I have a template, which we created in ComplyTrack, and it’s what the sites utilize when we have a situation involving privacy or security breaches. The staff will go through the template and answer all the questions.” This not only assists in recordkeeping and reporting, but it also enhances risk assessment. “The system will assign a risk number to the incident, and once it’s submitted, it comes to me, and I start the investigation. I can contact the person, and we’ll conduct interviews, discuss mitigation and training, or do what needs to be done for the particular situation. We log it as an investigation, get feedback, and track it all that way, from this single, instantly accessible platform.”

COMPLYTRACK’S TECHNICAL SUPPORT DELIVERS REAL ADVANTAGES

In addition to the features and the benefits of the ComplyTrack system itself, Ms. Sarantopoulos-Palese points to the people behind ComplyTrack as an important bonus. “ComplyTrack is the system I’ve been comfortable with for many years. But what I appreciate a lot about ComplyTrack and Wolters Kluwer, are the people assigned to our account.” It’s not just the responsive customer service that she appreciates, but the active partnering and problem-solving. “The ComplyTrack staff are always available and even help us develop new processes, or help us develop templates to take full advantage of the system. The system is great, but the people have been very positive for our account as well.”