MatrixCare®
by ResMed

How to evaluate an EHR for your organization

With **99% of referring entities** saying they would likely send more referrals to post-acute care providers who are more capable of interoperating effectively, it might be time for home health and hospice agencies to evaluate their current systems and consider whether it can meet evolving expectations of referral sources.

But evaluating electronic health records (EHRs) is no easy feat. In this white paper, we explore:

> What is SaaS and the benefits of SaaS technology
> Evaluating SaaS EHRs and their scalability
> 5 pitfalls to look for during EHR implementation

What is SaaS?

Software as a service, known as SaaS or software in the cloud, uses the internet to deliver applications. These applications typically require traditional software users to host, maintain, and troubleshoot locally. With SaaS, the burden of managing proprietary software versioning and updates — which requires budget and IT staff — is removed for post-acute care providers. Here are five ways SaaS can improve operations without having to hire more staff or build an onsite server.

1. SaaS technology is designed to grow with you
When implementation and training are comprehensive and customized to your organization's needs, SaaS technology can be scalable. The right SaaS partner will ensure the technology is designed to grow with your organization, which can set you up for success long before go-live.

2. Interoperability simplifies integrations
Partners and referring providers expect ongoing engagement, and by leveraging relationships with other national cloud-based vendors, SaaS can give providers access to integrations that can keep them connected.

3. Providers never have to wait for an upgrade
With SaaS, upgrade cycles are a thing of the past. Instead, upgrades and new releases are available instantly — and version requirements are never a worry.

4. It's more than software — it's support
Since SaaS is cloud-based, the centralized support that comes along with physically installing and locally configuring technology is no longer difficult to manage. Support is instead hybrid or virtual, which makes troubleshooting problems more efficient and training much faster.

5. SaaS is available any time
With SaaS platforms available online — and some features available offline — users can access their digital tools, wherever they may be. This is critical for home-based teams who are often in the field making multiple home visits.

Without the complications of physical software, post-acute providers can focus less on IT support and more on engaging patients and partners. The benefits of SaaS go far beyond ease of use — organizations save money and time onboarding, managing, and accessing their digital tools.

Evaluating SaaS EHRs and their scalability

Evaluating and deciding on an EHR is critical for any home health or hospice agency. Below, we explore the who, what, when, and how.

The who

Who are the people in your organization representing the influence of this type of decision? It's important to help ensure your team understands the challenges you face and the solutions you need.

The what

What are the business goals or objectives that your organization is striving for and what are the barriers to achieving those goals with the current systems that are in place? Determining software requirements and key functionality is the first step.

The when

The when is driven by a compelling event or anything that is driving your agency to the point of a negative impact of status quo. Are you experiencing manual, inefficient workflows, a lack of data analytics or predictive insights, or delayed care due to poor scheduling capabilities? By looking at downward trends that are not sustainable, whatever those may be, agencies can consider whether to stay on the current system or to make a move.

The how

How will you create an evaluation process? Determine what you like and dislike about your current system and how that would compare to your potential vendors or partners.

"*I strongly encourage MatrixCare for any company looking for an EHR. I've found them to have the most user-friendly and capabilities toward compliance.*

Jessica Johnstonbaugh, RN, BSN, Regional Director of Quality Assurance, Harbor Hospice

The importance of EHR scalability

The home health industry has seen a wave of consolidation events over the past few years, with the number of freestanding agencies steadily decreasing yearly. Hospice and palliative care are also going through a rapid growth phase of 7% to 8% annually, with the market expected to nearly double by 2030. Therefore, both home health and hospice organizations need EHR systems that pose no obstacles to growth.

Are your technology solutions ready to support your business expansion? Here are a few ways SaaS technology can give your EHR the scalability needed for long-term success.

Private and security

Hiring IT staff to manage security and safeguard data is a must for organizations that self-host their EHR. On the other hand, with reliable and scalable SaaS products, there's no need to budget for security expertise.

Regulatory compliance

As payment models evolve and shift to value-based, home health and hospice providers need an EHR that scales to comply with new regulatory demands. Thus, as organizations grow, a scalable EHR can carry the heavy load of regulation and compliance.

Interoperability

Interoperable EHR systems will efficiently take in new patients from referral providers via various eReferral platforms or with tight integration with the hospital EHR systems. Such systems are designed to transmit additional data and documentation electronically, such as signed physician orders, visit notes, patient forms, education information, and more — ultimately supporting that growth with more connected care.

Workflow efficiencies

Scalable EHRs are designed to help expand the organization efficiently, centralizing the workflows for reduced demands on back-office staff. Reductions include efficient patient intake and scheduling, automated order compliance, centralized OASIS scrubbing, user management, and other administrative tasks — helping to reduce the overall labor.

Enterprise-level analytics

Reliable and scalable analytics can provide trend reporting, predictive data, and other metrics across branches to help grow geographically and give insight into opportunities for improvement.

> *One of our primary motivations was to find a vendor that would exceed our expectations and provide the necessary functionality we needed to support all of our business lines.*
>
> **Susan Enright,** VP of Home & Community Based Services, Providence Life Services

When clinicians have tools to spend less time documenting, they can provide more visits in a day and become more productive by reducing the need for back-office staff to validate their work.

As a result, the organization can do more with less staff — creating opportunities and support for growth.

5 pitfalls to look for during EHR implementation

To avoid costly mistakes, EHR implementation needs to be thoroughly planned with a great deal of care. Once all is in place and the critical path is identified, executing your plan is the key to success. Here are the five top pitfalls of EHR implementations:

1. Failing to include clinicians/staff in the planning stages
Having clinicians involved from the beginning avoids future issues or conflicts. For the ultimate success, involve staff from day one and consider their thoughts on product selection and implementation.

2. Expecting your new EHR to be a silver bullet
Although your system should ultimately save you time and money, it will not be an instant fix. Many people think an EHR will solve their internal problems — but the truth is it will only highlight problems that need to be addressed to improve the organization moving forward.

3. Not dedicating appropriate time for training
A common mistake is undervaluing the importance of training. Failure to provide and engage in training will only allow chaos during go-live. Practicing workflow-based training with adequate repetition is the key to success.

4. Thinking it will be the same as your last implementation
Not taking the time to work out the changes from what you do today to how your new process will look on the new EHR, can and will create frustration with your team that will lead to operational inefficiencies and frustrations at go-live.

5. Refusing to ask for extra help
Thinking staff can take on a conversion — along with learning a new product and dealing with a change in workflow — could lead to a disaster. Bringing in temporary assistants to help during this transitional period can go a long way in decreasing anxiety and burnout during implementation and go-live.

The MatrixCare difference

An EHR is more than technology, it's an investment in more connected, compassionate care. MatrixCare's multi-award winning EHR solution for home health and hospice offers superior functionalities that help intuitively boost efficiencies, simplify data-sharing, and close more gaps with interoperability capabilities. This ongoing dedication to post-acute innovation helps improve the care experience for everyone involved.

From implementation to go-live and beyond, our team is dedicated to your success and the care you provide.

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MatrixCare makes us successful. They help us deliver the quality care our patients deserve and maintain our staff satisfaction. We had a successful zero-deficiency survey all around: productive staff, satisfied families, well-cared-for patients — and a great EHR system that makes it all come together.

Janell Solomon, Director of Compliance, Sangre de Cristo Community Care

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