

CHC Consulting Maximizes USAC Funding for CommonSpirit Health

BACKGROUND

In February 2019, healthcare systems Catholic Health Initiatives (CHI) and Dignity Health finalized their merger to become CommonSpirit Health, one of the nation's largest nonprofit healthcare organizations, with more than 140 hospitals and 1,000 care sites in rural and urban areas across 21 states. The merger allowed CHI and Dignity to achieve greater operational efficiencies in an ever-evolving and complex healthcare environment.

To date, CHC Consulting has helped to facilitate more than \$36 million in USAC fund disbursement to 500+ healthcare providers across 41 states.

But a merger of this size and scale made it a daunting task for CommonSpirit to compile the information required for Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) funding of CommonSpirit's broadband services. USAC, a nonprofit corporation overseeing funding for the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), provides funding for healthcare providers' internet and telecommunications services, which are playing a critical role in facilitating and improving patient care, increasing staff productivity, and reducing costs.

OPPORTUNITY

Faced with higher costs operating the combined companies' internet and telecom systems in rural areas, it was imperative that CommonSpirit receive as much as possible in USAC funding to help offset those costs. Paying for these services has long been a frustration for rural healthcare providers because they typically face significantly greater expense and obstacles in gaining access compared to their urban counterparts.

USAC Rural Health Care (RHC) Program requirements for location eligibility, RFP submission, bid evaluation, and service eligibility determination are complex and time consuming. Funding requests and disbursements necessitate collaboration with the service providers and supporting document validation. In CommonSpirit's case, the health system determined outside assistance was needed due to the massive size and scope of CHI's and Dignity's broadband connections and invoices that needed to be located, analyzed and confirmed for USAC funding eligibility.



COMMONSPIRIT ENGAGES CHC CONSULTING FOR USAC FUNDING

CHC Consulting was selected for this assignment, which continued after their merger with Dignity Health, because of their experience and expertise in helping healthcare organizations overcome challenges in reaching their USAC funding goals.

The goal for CommonSpirit year one was straightforward – attain as much funding as possible within a limited four-month window. The following year, CHC Consulting took a deep dive into CommonSpirit's communication systems to further expand.

With the recent merger of CHI and Dignity Health, access to accurate data was a challenge. CHC Consulting had experienced this before and developed a plan to address the gap in complete and accurate data.

CHC Consulting also analyzed hundreds of thousands of items on service provider invoices sent to CHI and Dignity. This enabled CHC Consulting to confirm broadband connections that were not on the companies' databases and determine which connections were no longer being used. CHC Consulting also regularly reached out to various departments within CommonSpirit to obtain and verify pertinent information needed for USAC's approval process. Where questions remained, CHC Consulting reached out to individual sites to verify connection information, in order to ensure the most accurate data possible was submitted. CHC Consulting also provided CommonSpirit with information on circuits that were no longer in use, saving thousands of dollars that went straight to the bottom line.



“CHC Consulting worked meticulously for months to locate internet and telecom connections at CommonSpirit's hospitals, clinics, data centers and other facilities. In some instances, we found services, website addresses, and links that were not listed at some of the health system's facilities or in corporate records.”

Whittney Walker
Vice President of Telecom Services

Once the initial data validation phase of work was completed, details of the health system's internet and telecom services were stored in CHC Consulting's proprietary funding process management application, making it easier to quickly retrieve this information for future USAC funding requests and deeper service analysis.

Also during this period, CHC Consulting focused on learning the structure of the merged organization from both an operational and technical standpoint. This was done so that CHC Consulting could gain a better understanding of how the health system's data was being utilized throughout its vast network, further enabling CHC Consulting's ability to verify that all of CommonSpirit's data connections were documented properly and met USAC's eligibility requirements.

CHC Consulting also assisted CommonSpirit in its competitive bidding process for service providers. This included distributing and managing requests for proposals to providers and providing guidance on a scoring matrix of each provider to help CommonSpirit get the best pricing, while meeting all technical requirements, and complying with USAC program rules.



RESULTS

As a result of CHC Consulting's due diligence on CommonSpirit's USAC funding applications and its highly collaborative relationship with CommonSpirit's leadership, CHC Consulting succeeded in achieving the best possible outcome for the organization's funding requests.

For the 2019 funding year, USAC disbursed \$5.5 million to the health system, five times more than what CHI and its outside consultant delivered in USAC funding the prior year.

For the 2020 funding year, CommonSpirit has received almost \$8 million in USAC funding. The health system has received approval for nearly \$14 million on its 2021 funding request.

CHC Consulting's huge database of service provider information also identified more than \$100,000 in additional savings that CommonSpirit can realize by reducing or discontinuing services that are not in use.

CHI/CommonSpirit USAC Funding Received:



THE CHC CONSULTING DIFFERENCE

CHC's IT team offers a proven methodology to track and report telecommunications and internet expenses in order to maximize USAC funding. CHC helps critical access, rural, community hospitals and some of the largest health systems in the country gain access to this beneficial federal program.

Clients appreciate CHC Consulting's deep knowledge of USAC requirements and the team's ability to manage complex networks to bring the most value.

Contact CHC Consulting today to learn more by calling 972-943-6400.



CHC CONSULTING TELECOMMUNICATIONS & USAC SERVICES INCLUDE:

Turnkey Solution

CHC Consulting takes charge of Funding Process Management including strategy, eligibility and application, as well as the RFP, bidding and negotiation processes. We also help with documentation to USAC and ongoing monitoring and reapplication to USAC in future years.

Program Evaluation and Planning

We analyze your hospital's current telecommunications services and costs. Based on that information, we make recommendations to improve your service and reduce your cost.

Training and Support

Onsite or web-based support and training options for your staff.

HCF Consortium Setup

CHC Consulting helps qualified healthcare providers establish their own consortium and obtain funding.

USAC Program Denial Appeal Support

CHC Consulting can jump in and work on your behalf to adjudicate denied funding requests.



About Community Hospital Corporation

Community Hospital Corporation owns, manages and consults with hospitals through CHC Hospitals, CHC Consulting and CHC ContinueCARE, with the purpose to collaborate with partners and bring innovative solutions to support the vibrancy and accessibility of community healthcare. Based in Plano, Texas, CHC provides the resources and experience community hospitals need to improve quality outcomes, patient satisfaction and financial performance.

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