



CASE STUDY

TRS Helps Reduce Staffing Costs, Raises Service Level for Northeastern Health System

When the leadership team at Northeastern Health System (NHS) of Oklahoma felt underserved by their managed services provider, they turned to TRS Managed Services. The TRS team quickly reduced staffing costs and complexity, while delivering the clinical talent and exceptional service NHS needed.

THE CHALLENGE

During the difficult months of the COVID pandemic, the leaders at Northeastern Health System in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, were doing everything possible to support their community, nurses, and other healthcare professionals. They brought in more temporary clinicians to help handle the patient load at this busy, 91-bed regional hospital—even as high demand was driving up the costs of travel contracts.

Plus, as travel staffing rates trended downward following the pandemic, the management team realized that they were still paying over market rates. They were also managing a higher number of travelers than they felt necessary. Yet their requests for help from their managed services provider were not being addressed.

Building on more than 25 years of industry experience, TRS uses a personalized approach to develop customized workforce solutions and quality placements for community hospitals, critical access hospitals, and other facilities throughout the United States.

THE SOLUTION

In early 2022, the executives at Northeastern decided it was time for a change. They met with Jeremy Wilson, vice president of TRS Managed Services and TRS International. Wilson and his team listened to their issues, proposed a plan, and then got to work bringing the facility's costs down.

"When we switched over to TRS, we had 36 travel contracts with high bill rates. TRS started negotiating and reduced rates in the first six months. We were also able to hire some of the people under contract into staff positions," reported Carissa Felts, MSN, RN, CENP, vice president of inpatient nursing services at Northeastern.

Since those initial months, the TRS team has continued to help lower the hospital's supplemental staffing costs, develop a new pipeline for permanent employees, and provide timely staffing support.

MOVING FORWARD

Getting to the real issues

Located more than an hour from larger metropolitan areas in Oklahoma and Arkansas, Northeastern Health System serves the 17,000 residents of Tahlequah, Oklahoma, and several surrounding counties. The hospital sees more than 20,000 patients and conducts 7,300 surgeries annually, with a workforce of 1,200 employees.

Wilson and the TRS team are very familiar with the recruitment and retention challenges of rural facilities like Northeastern. They also recognize that every organization has unique needs and take the time to get acquainted with the hospital's leadership team, the local community, and ensure that the clinicians they place are well-prepared to succeed.

"We gather important feedback from all the key players and staff members, through surveys and personal conversations. This helps clarify their top issues and priorities, and helps us understand the type of candidates who will fit with their staff. Then we can work out a plan together. The time invested pays immediate dividends and provides a baseline for continuous improvement," Wilson said.

Delivering next-level service

"The TRS team is really understanding that when we have a need for temporary staff, we have a need. With our previous MSP, there would be a mandatory two-week waiting period to get staff on site, and it was usually longer than that. The turnaround time with TRS was so much quicker," Felts noted. "When you need staff to be there for your patients, you can't wait two weeks."

She added that TRS has been able to place good quality clinicians in a wide variety of specialties. Many travelers have extended their contracts, and a few have converted to full-time employees. TRS made it possible for the facility to focus in areas other than constantly filling vacancies and orienting travelers.



Growing a pipeline of international candidates

After a few months of working with TRS Managed Services, the Northeastern team began talking to TRS International about building up their workforce for the future. They could see that direct hire of international clinicians had some clear advantages, but the process was beyond their hiring capabilities. TRS stepped in to take care of recruitment and logistical issues, while providing training and support for Felts and her team.

"So far, we have hired nine international nurses and two med techs. The med techs are already here working and they are fabulous. We are still waiting for the U.S. Visa program to open up again and allow the nurses to join them," she said.

Earning a strong recommendation

Would Felts recommend TRS Managed Services and TRS International to other healthcare organizations? "Absolutely," she said, pointing to their responsiveness and their ability to deliver results.

"I especially appreciate the ease of access to address an issue. Everyone at TRS is very approachable, quick to respond to a problem, and help resolve it. And that's huge. They also work proactively on our behalf," she said.

While Felts said that travel contract rates and full-time employment costs are still higher than before COVID, she and her staff now feel they have someone looking out for their interests to bring in quality talent and keep costs under control.

"The people we've worked with have been phenomenal and have helped get us to where we are today. I'll always appreciate them. I also know they'll be there to help find us the agency staff and full-time workers we need to continue providing high-quality care," Felts added.

CONTACT US

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