

Healthcare non-profit puts patient care first with a modern network

Helio Health reclaims time and talent with simplified IT infrastructure from a reliable technology partner

Helio Health, a non-profit substance use disorder and behavioral health treatment system in central New York, is focused on one thing: changing the lives of the people that come through their doors. But welcoming their community with open arms comes with challenges.

In recent years, the organization grew to encompass 35 staffed locations, 1,345 residential beds, 970 employees and a complex assortment of technologies from multiple providers. Helio Health's IT infrastructure was challenging for staff as they strove to support the patient experience they took pride in delivering.

Chief Information Officer Corey Zeigler knew they could do better.

A consolidated technology infrastructure would empower Helio Health to increase efficiency, cut costs and reinvest those resources back into their community.

They refused to settle in their search for a new technology partner, and it turns out they didn't have to. They found everything they needed in Spectrum Enterprise.

Patchwork solutions prove ineffective

When Zeigler joined Helio Health in May 2019, he saw an immediate need to better serve the organization's employees, patients and community.

The non-profit had been growing rapidly, and the complexity of its network had grown with it. As they merged the three companies they had acquired in 2021, Zeigler had to create a plan to integrate it all. The incompatible systems, technologies and vendors had already created challenges for the IT team.

"We would acquire buildings and services and then connect them as quickly as possible. We had to keep growing to meet patient needs, and in some cases had to connect to new locations using the legacy systems in place," Zeigler says. "It was starting to become a bit of a mess."

With 25 different phone systems and a spider's web of virtual private networks (VPNs), Helio Health needed to bring everything under one centralized infrastructure. The current network was inflexible and inefficient. The VPNs were on the verge of being overwhelmed as they added users and sites. Bandwidth, shared between residents and staff, was beginning to struggle with handling the ever increasing volume as residents and staff both upped their Internet usage significantly during pandemic times.

The decentralized network created unnecessary complexity and siloed data, making it cumbersome to share records and data.



By ensuring patients and caregivers access to a telemedicine platform, Helio Health's new, robust network allows staff to connect to patients virtually, safely and securely.

Client profile



Client
Helio Health

Industry
Healthcare

Services
Fiber Internet Access
Ethernet
Fiber Connect Plus TV
Managed Router Service
Fortinet-based Security Solution
SIP Trunking

Overview

- Helio Health's rapid growth led to a complex and bloated technology infrastructure that slowed operations and frustrated staff.
- The existing network lacked the scalability to support future growth, and outages could slow their electronic health record system.
- Spectrum Enterprise was chosen for its nationwide reach, reliable services and history of customer support.

Outcomes

- No more outages and downtime thanks to secure, reliable connectivity — all on a single network.
- The organization eliminated long-distance calling fees between locations and streamlined phone tree routing with SIP trunking.
- Helio Health will reap tens of thousands of dollars in savings, with a consolidated network under a single partner.
- The IT team is now extended and supported by enterprise-level equipment and specialists.

Why it matters

- Important health data is accessible and secure, protecting patients and reducing risk.
- Cost savings are funneled back into patient programs and care.
- Managed services and the consolidated network free up staff time to focus on the organization's mission to transform the lives of those struggling with substance use and mental health disorders.
- Helio Health has plenty of room to grow with a scalable network and reliable technology partner.



Helio Health streamlined its phone system and reduced costs at the same time.

Systems were incompatible and made it difficult to deploy locally hosted solutions like a telemedicine platform. The legacy phone system was unwieldy, and a source of some frustration. Patients had to call different numbers to reach each location, and staff calls from one facility to another incurred long-distance calling fees.

“Patients were annoyed — in this day and age, they had to hang up and call somewhere else?” Zeigler says. “It was not the customer experience we wanted to provide.”

The patchwork of systems also had a direct impact on his staff, who were hindered by the hard-to-manage network. Administration was a challenge; even sorting out and paying invoices each month was cumbersome. And whenever they faced a technical problem, Zeigler's staff had to involve multiple vendors. Their technology — and as a result, their talent — was stretched as thin as it could go, and changes needed to be made.

“We have really good, talented people. I want them to be supporting frontline staff who are taking care of people. I want them to be innovating — not putting out fires,” says Zeigler. He knew it was time to simplify their network by unifying it under one provider.

But he also realized that consolidating the network wasn't enough. To prevent the same issues from reoccurring as the company expanded in the future, Helio needed a partner that could think ahead. One with the expertise and technology to scale with them, and also offered services to extend beyond what Zeigler's small IT team could handle.

“Patients today expect more from their providers. They want to make an appointment online; they want to interface with an organization conveniently. A lot of that is dependent on the technologies that we use and the network that underpins them,” he says.

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— Corey Zeigler, Chief Information Officer

In addition to these challenges, their old network was unreliable. Helio Health's electronic health record (EHR) system, which houses the majority of their patient health information, is cloud based, and access to it hinged on network reliability.



Healthcare providers and patients alike enjoy the benefits of secure, reliable connections to electronic health records.

Unfortunately, downtime was beginning to become a regular occurrence.

As more health records, processes and patient data were digitized, an outage could be disruptive — if not outright dangerous. Helio Health was convinced: It was time to modernize their network.

New network offers a fresh start

Zeigler began the hunt for a partner, and Spectrum Enterprise immediately came to mind.

Helio Health partnered with Spectrum Enterprise in 2016 to install Fiber Connect Plus TV service at several locations. Matt Russo, IT director for the non-profit, had been impressed by the solution's performance as well as the Spectrum Enterprise team's commitment to their organization.

At Russo's urging, Zeigler reached out to Spectrum Enterprise account manager Cory Sullivan and shared his frustrations with their existing infrastructure. Sullivan quickly rallied the Spectrum Enterprise team to devise a solution to Helio Health's challenges.

The network design included 500 Mbps Fiber Internet Access (FIA)

service to two Helio Health's locations: the primary facility in downtown Syracuse, and a secondary site and disaster recovery facility in Liverpool, New York. Dedicated 100 Mbps fiber Ethernet service would provide redundant connectivity, ensuring that Helio Health could continue to operate even in the face of a network disruption. Twenty-three locations would be connected with fiber, and supplied with private connectivity ranging from 10 Mbps to 100 Mbps, and the rest would connect via VPN.

Sullivan also suggested Managed Router Service and a Fortinet-based security solution. Managed Router Service, fully managed by Spectrum Enterprise, would provide Zeigler with a hands-off solution for optimizing network traffic and bandwidth across all of Helio Health's locations. A Fortinet-based security solution would be implemented at the two main sites, and provide a managed firewall to protect against network threats while also securing site-to-site connections and enabling VPN connections for remote users. Zeigler could free his staff from maintenance and troubleshooting duties, leaving them more time for strategic projects.

High-capacity SIP trunking with a centralized private branch exchange (PBX) would replace Helio Health's legacy phone systems. Because the hosted phone solution would run over Spectrum Enterprise fiber Ethernet service, it would eliminate long-distance calling rates between Helio Health locations, reduce costs and create a seamless experience for callers.

Spectrum Enterprise was the right partner for the job. Sullivan and the team had put in the work to learn about their organization and create a tailored solution to solve their immediate pain points. And the scalability of the network, combined with its nationwide reach, would ensure Helio Health could support future growth.

As a non-profit organization, Helio Health also needed the solution to be affordable. The cost savings the consolidated network offered checked the final box on Zeigler's requirements list. "Put simply, it was the right solution and the right partnership," says Zeigler.

Helio Health decided to move forward. Spectrum Enterprise got to work putting the plan into motion.

Reliable connectivity brings peace of mind

Helio Health now has the dependable connectivity needed to provide the quality of care their patients deserve. The cloud-based EHR system and other essential data and applications can now be accessed quickly and reliably — the staff has the peace of mind that comes from knowing they can securely access critical patient information anytime, at any location, no matter what.

The centralized phone system connecting their facilities provides a seamless experience to inbound

callers. Staff can easily transfer people from one location to another from a single directory.

With scalable technology and nationwide reach, the Spectrum Enterprise solutions gives Helio Health the freedom to expand, knowing that their network can keep up with growth. “It’s going to be easier for us to add new locations to our network now,” Zeigler says. “As we acquire or merge with other facilities, we know we’ll be able to quickly integrate new locations and users.”

Kory Hopkins, IT Director - Infrastructure for Helio Health, concurs, “One of the key benefits with this solution is the scalability. We’re adding locations at rapid pace and it’s not going to require reconfiguration of our network to accommodate that.”

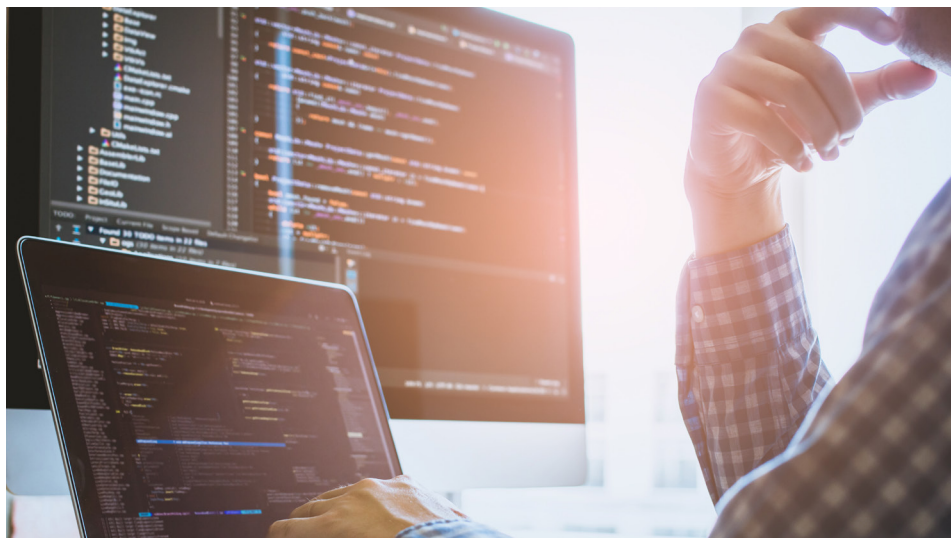
Their improved infrastructure has already helped them meet new, unexpected challenges: As COVID-19 restrictions limited traditional brick-and-mortar care, the scalable network gave patients and caregivers essential access to their telemedicine platform.

Both staff and patients now enjoy greater flexibility and more secure virtual access. Helio Health’s robust network will allow staff to reach further, connecting to patients no matter where they live or work.

Managed Router Service and a Fortinet-based security solution save the IT team valuable time, liberating them to work on supporting frontline staff.

“With a new, modernized network we can focus less on reliability and more on patient care.”

— Corey Zeigler



The Helio Health IT team now has more time to focus on the organization’s mission to transform the lives of those struggling with substance use and mental health disorders.

After consolidating everything under a single partner, administration and management is streamlined and hassle-free. “With a new, modernized network we can focus less on reliability and more on patient care,” says Zeigler.

Their consolidated and simplified network will save Helio Health tens of thousands of dollars over the next few years. For a non-profit with rising demand for their care, this means everything: “Anytime we can save a few dollars, it means that we can invest in new beds, add staff or provide amenities that improve the patient, client or resident experience while under our care,” Zeigler says. “We are committed to creating an environment where patients feel comfortable, and are always seeking to reinvest resources with the goal of improving the patient experience.”

Modern network powers compassionate care

Helio Health, now empowered by a modernized network, is ready to take on whatever comes next. How much more will they grow? There’s no telling, but the network will certainly be able to scale to accommodate that growth.

One thing is certain: Backed by a trusted partner and reliable solutions, the network is now the last thing on their minds. And that means Helio Health can get back to doing what they do best: offering hope and healing wherever it’s needed.

“We serve the most vulnerable population in the central New York region, and it really fills our hearts to be of service to that population,” says Zeigler. “I’m confident that we made the right decision to partner with Spectrum Enterprise.”

About Spectrum Enterprise

Spectrum Enterprise, a part of Charter Communications, Inc., is a national provider of scalable, fiber technology solutions serving many of America’s largest businesses and communications service providers. The broad Spectrum Enterprise portfolio includes networking and managed services solutions: Internet access, Ethernet access and networks, Voice and TV solutions. The Spectrum Enterprise team of experts works closely with clients to achieve greater business success by providing solutions designed to meet their evolving needs. For more information, visit enterprise.spectrum.com.

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