

# North Valley Health Center

Strengthening physical and psychological staff safety; making workflows more efficient

## Organization overview

North Valley Health Center (NVHC) is a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation located in Warren, MN and is the only primary care medical facility located in northwest Minnesota's Marshall County. The hospital is designated as a Critical Access Hospital currently licensed for 12 beds and its primary care clinic is designated as a Rural Health Clinic. NVHC provides family and specialty care, procedures, inpatient care, swing bed, physical therapy, imaging, laboratory, a 24-hour emergency room and a variety of other medical services.

## Challenges

- Keep Critical Access Hospital staff connected with a clinical communication platform
- Strengthen staff safety, efficiency and experience
- Improve patient safety and experience

## Vocera Solution

- Vocera Smartbadge
- Vocera mobile application
- Nurse Call Integration

## Results\*

- Improved communication efficiency
- Increased patient and staff safety
- Enhanced staff and patient experience
- Accelerated the response time for physicians to receive lab results

## Challenges

North Valley Health Center (NVHC), a primary care medical facility comprised of a Critical Access Hospital and Rural Health Clinic located in Warren, MN, wanted a solution to improve communication efficiency, keep busy staff connected, strengthen safety and bolster experience.

"Rural healthcare staff wear multiple hats," said Sara Kazmierczak, RN, Chief Nurse Officer at NVHC. "Communication is always challenging when care team members are sprawled across different areas of the facility. Because our staff are exceptionally busy and in high demand, they can't waste time to stop what they're doing, leave a patient room and find help."

## Vocera Solution

Leadership at NVHC learned about Vocera technology from multiple care team members who used Vocera technology at other facilities. They decided to deploy the Vocera Smartbadge, a wearable communication device that combines smartphone usability with hands-free freedom, throughout the facility.

"Several members of our staff had used Vocera at previous hospitals and shared how well it worked to streamline communication," said Kazmierczak. "Hearing about how great the technology worked for them made choosing Vocera solutions an easy decision for our organization."

"We selected the Smartbadge to keep our staff and patients safe and connected," said Jon Linnell, Chief Executive Officer at NVHC. "Our staff work across a dispersed area and our organization doesn't rely on disruptive overhead paging. Vocera technology stood out to us as the perfect solution to enhance communication across all areas of our facility."

All staff at NVHC use the Vocera Smartbadge to communicate throughout their shifts. Nurses can connect with physicians or other nurses for additional assistance by simply saying, "OK, Vocera," without having to leave their patient's side. The organization's nurse call system is integrated with its Vocera system, so staff receive nurse call notifications directly to their Smartbadge and can respond without needing to go to the patient room.

Physicians can access patient lab results from their Vocera Smartbadge. Laboratory staff use the Vocera mobile application on a computer to send lab results directly to the Smartbadge of the appropriate physician

Additionally, physicians can easily connect with each other or with their patient's care team without relying on phone calls or hoping they find the right person in the hall. They can also use their Smartbadge to call outside facilities that don't use Vocera solutions without needing to search for phone numbers or connect to a phone.

## Results\*

Communication efficiency has been enhanced at NVHC since implementing Vocera technology – staff are more connected to each other and to their patients, which has improved overall safety.

“We recently had a nurse in a potentially dangerous situation with a patient and are grateful we had the Vocera system in place,” Kazmierczak said. “The nurse was alone with a patient who started to fall. She was able to quickly call for help and prevent the fall, and any injury to herself, using her Vocera Smartbadge. Our nurse said that having the ability to simply say, ‘call charge nurse’ and have help by her side in a few seconds was a lifesaver. We don’t have an abundance of staff, so there are often times when our care team members are alone with patients. Vocera technology assures us that our staff are always connected to each other and can call for help in an instant.”

“The Vocera system helps boost safety at our organization across a multitude of levels,” said Linnell. “In the event that we are ever faced with an emergency situation, like an active shooter, we can discreetly alert all staff on their Vocera devices, without amplifying the event overhead.”

The integration between the organization’s nurse call and Vocera systems has improved both staff and patient experience. Staff no longer have to search for call lights or walk to a patient room to respond to a nurse call notification, improving their experience. The patient experience has improved too because patients no longer have to wait for a response from their care team.

“Because our workflows have been more efficient, patients don’t spend any unnecessary time waiting for a response from nursing staff,” Linnell said. “Our physicians are notified as soon as test results are available – they no longer need to be at a computer.”

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– **Jon Linnell**

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Chief Nurse Officer  
North Valley Health Center

\*In addition to Vocera technology, the facility’s results may reflect the additional training, policies, procedures and specific configuration parameters implemented by the facility. The results are not necessarily representative of what another facility may experience.

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