



CHC was founded in 1972 as a primary healthcare provider focused on serving the less fortunate. CHC is building a world-class system that is committed to caring for special populations, improving health outcomes for patients, and building healthy communities.

Community Health Center Protects Patient Health Information with End-to-End Security Solution from Fortinet & Security7

Upgrading Health IT for the 21st Century

Since 1972, Community Health Center, Inc. (CHC) has been one of the leading healthcare providers across the state of Connecticut, providing comprehensive primary care services in medicine, dentistry, and behavioral health. CHC has grown to serve over 130,000 active patients – available to all, but primarily focused on the less fortunate. Its programs incorporate prevention and health promotion, treatment of illness, and management of chronic disease—using innovative service delivery models and state of the art technology.

“We’re distributed across 250 locations. There are about 200 school-based locations and 13 main health centers. Then we have a lot of offices in buildings throughout the state,” says Edward Bianco, CHC’s Chief Information Officer.

Until recently, the biggest challenges for CHC’s existing Health IT infrastructure were a combination of aging technology, a broad suite of products, limited staffing, and budgetary demands. In addition, slow network traffic was limiting their ability to deliver care to patients. Outdated technology was leaving them vulnerable to present-day cyber attack strategies.

Details

Customer Name: Community Health Center, Inc. (CHC)
Industry: Healthcare
Location: Connecticut (USA)
Website: www.chc1.com

Business Impact

- Network consolidation
- Cost savings
- Simplified controls
- Managed services
- Better security
- Head start on future improvements

“My concern is always the shifting threat landscape from hackers, malware, and persistent attacks. The problem I have today is that the attackers’ ability to gain access is getting more and more sophisticated,” says Bianco.

“Our cyber security priorities are to protect the integrity of our data, especially our patient health information (PHI) to ensure that the security of that information is kept private. As a healthcare provider it is critical for us to ensure that we don’t have the data leaks that have occurred in other institutions. So we’re doing everything we can to fortify our network—detection and prevention of any access to protected healthcare information and confidential data that we may have on our network,” says Bianco.

Regulatory compliance was another compounding factor in this regard. CHC’s CEO Mark Masselli explains, “We want to do everything possible to make sure that the private information people share with us is well protected. Certainly there have been increased sanctions on those who haven’t paid attention and haven’t aligned themselves with both common sense and the regulatory environment. On both sides of the equation, we’re sensitive about the responsibilities that we have.”

Pairing Their Problems with the Right Partners

While safeguarding patient data is a critically important task, CHC was also struggling with the same dilemma faced by many IT organizations today—lack of staff to manage multiple locations and remote users 24/7.

“All the tools and the knowledge—we just didn’t have that. Nor did we have the budget to add all of those people,” says Bianco. “I lean toward the philosophy of ‘If I can’t do it better than a vendor, then I’ll outsource it.’ Especially critical functions, which right now is managing the healthcare organization’s core capabilities around our patient electronic health information.”

The particularly sensitive nature of health IT data meant that a network security upgrade for CHC would require serious evaluation in terms of partnering vendors and technology.

“I identified that the local market didn’t have the expertise I was looking for. So I went to Security7. I was happy to have them come on board. They worked with me very closely to redesign a network based on my needs,” says Bianco.

Choosing the Best Security for Their Situation

With a partnering vendor in place, CHC’s IT team could move on to evaluating the best network security technologies for their environment. They considered multiple solution providers, but proposal evaluation proved confusing because most pricing options were offered on an a-la-carte basis. Fortinet’s bundling strategy allowed for the best combination of security, reliability, and performance at the best price.

“We did a competitive analysis and we found that Fortinet met all of our needs at a price point and functionality that none of the other vendors could even come close to.” By replacing their legacy hardware, CHC was able to combine several technologies into a robust Fortinet solution that fit their budget while providing strong security, reliability, and performance.

“I worked with Fortinet and Security7 in the past and they provided excellent cyber security and advice. I hired them to implement a similar type of network redesign topology to improve my ability to protect information from an endpoint perspective, lower my costs, and support management requirements.”

CHC’s initial Fortinet hardware purchase included two Fortigate 800Cs (with centralized log and reporting via FortiAnalyzer HQ), Fortigate 90Ds for 13 locations, and Fortigate 200Ds for other locations. “I was very happy with their service, support, and the functionality as well as the diverse device types—they sold networking equipment that fit my needs. They were very good across the whole plane. Fortinet is definitely one of the top vendors that any organization should consider,” says Bianco.

The potential Fortinet /Security7 benefits that CHC anticipated would soon start to prove themselves—and then some.

Consolidation on One Network

The implementation across CHCs distributed Connecticut locations was seamless. “Security7 did an excellent job of understanding the network we had in place, creating all the tunnels, and all the remapping so the existing network could coexist with the new network. There was never any interruption of service, which is incredible,” says Bianco. “We had several competing proposals from other vendors. As

an end user, I rely on vendors who can follow through and deliver solutions based on my needs. Fortinet's commitment to rigorous third-party testing and Security7's strategic consulting experience helped me cut through the industry noise and gave me the confidence to select them over other competitive offerings."

Consolidation and consistency across the network security infrastructure would show immediate, visible benefits. "I replaced a lot of the legacy systems with single systems. Before, I had two or three of the different stacks of devices. Now, the Fortinet solution can do everything in one box—which is a real improvement for us because it simplifies the management of our network," says Bianco.

"The biggest change is that now we're on one network – all on Fortinet. We have a single pane-of-glass console. We have FortiAnalyzers. And we have a single tool now instead of all the different tools that we used before."

Simplified, Proactive Management & Support

Because of CHC's limited IT staffing, having a managed solution was exceptionally important for their new implementation. Security7's role as managed security service provider—combined with Fortinet's exceptional visibility and traffic control features (URL filter, web filter, policy restrictions)—would lift an immense burden from CHC's IT team.

"One of the best features that we have is managed service—someone looking at this 24/7. If they see a problem, they're on the system before my staff even knows about it. And most of the time, they're fixing issues before I even get a phone call, which is outstanding," says Bianco.

"Security7 came with an incredible proposal that outsourced the management of the endpoints, so they do all my detection and updates and patching. My team now can focus on the infrastructure and not the devices. It greatly improves my ability to do what I do best and gets Security7 to do what they do best—and provide us with the best security in the area."

Fortinet's unified solution also helps in this regard—with an end-to-end security infrastructure that streamlines service and maintenance for better operational efficiency. "Before, I had to call this vendor, I had to call that vendor. But with this

setup now, I have a single person for a contact who will help us isolate and find root cause issues without spending hours trying to figure out what's wrong. So our uptime is much better and we anticipate that will continue moving forward," says Bianco.

Faster, Better Security

"Security is an ongoing challenge and I feel much better knowing that I don't have to worry about network security from the Fortinet and Security7 side," says Bianco. Beyond ease of management and cost savings, CHC's new security infrastructure would instantly show improved application performance while delivering encrypted traffic over a more resilient network.

"We now have a virtual private network. We're also doing IPsec (Internet Protocol Security) over the private network, so we have much better security. We're not sending plain text, even over the private network. I feel much more secure now that I have better tools and I have an outsourced firm that understands security to help us," says Bianco.

The addition of 10 Gigabit Ethernet interfaces was also a step toward even greater security, laying the foundation for the addition of an Internal Segmentation Firewall (ISFW)—protection beyond the network perimeter to keep valuable data out of the hands of hackers in the event of a breach.

"That's something for the future, but we have the infrastructure in place. Before Fortinet, we weren't able to do this," says Bianco.

A Focus on the Future

"The challenge for us over the next five-to-ten years is how we continue to keep ahead of the ever increasing security arms race being orchestrated by hackers and nation states to ensure we can match their sophistication and ability to find weakness in our security defenses. This will become an epic battle that will require continuous vigilance and strong partnership within the IT security sector to contain and protect the information entrusted to us," says Bianco.

"The challenge is how do we get beyond the current technology, where we really can protect the data that's entrusted to us to make sure that it doesn't get accessed. And that's an ongoing battle that I need help with," says Bianco.

Advanced Threat Protection through sandboxing is another feature that CHC is looking to add in the near-term. “With the roadmap we’re looking at, the FortiSandbox is something we’re very interested in. It’s part of the strategic plan that we’re putting in place,” says Bianco.

CHC’s partnership with Security7 and Fortinet positions them to take on those coming challenges. “Security7 is focused on this side of security, providing the best service, support, and equipment that a client like me needs,” says Bianco. “Fortinet should always be on the review list with other vendors if anybody’s trying to build a really secure and powerful network.”

CHC’s CEO Mark Masselli adds, “We’re always looking to develop systems that are efficient, effective, and elegant. Fortinet fits all of those for us. We look forward to a long partnership.”



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