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– David Chitwood
  Information Technology Manager
  RWHC

Health Cooperative Discovers Fortinet as the Most Certified Security Vendor

Situation

Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative, or the RWHC, is owned and operated by thirty nine medical-surgical hospitals. Focus for RWHC is on developing a cooperative system between those hospitals within the system. Established in 1979 as the Rural Wisconsin Hospital Cooperative, it receives national praise as one of the earliest models for networking rural hospitals to be successful. Many of the items on RWHC focus on uniquely rural needs and finding those solutions. Among them are federal healthcare reform, fair Medicare and Medicare payment, federal and state regulation, property tax exemption for nonprofit hospitals, address a shortage of rural physicians and providers, push for workplace and community wellness, in addition to creating a strong link between economic development and rural health. Bringing a voice to regional provider networks, payers, and the quality improvement movements is also a part of their mission.

Details

Customer Name: Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative
Industry: Healthcare
Location: Sauk City, WI

Challenges

- Network remote sites with centrally managed security

- Address growing organization with limited budget as a non-profit

Objectives

- Increase equipment capacity for the datacenter

- Maintain requirements for strict federal compliancy (HIPAA)

Deployment

- FortiAP-210B FortiAP-220B

- FortiGate-200B

- FortiGate-300C

- FortiGate-1000C

- FortiMail

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In 2007, RWHC created a not-for-profit technology division called the RWHC ITN (Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative Information Technology Network). ITN was created primarily for hospitals who wanted to share a single Electronic Medical Record service. Initially, four hospitals made up the ITN, and two hospitals have since joined this network. ITN has expanded its EMR service to include ancillary modules such as PACS, Emergency Department and Patient Discharge Instructions.

RWHC ITN was the first to apply for funding from the Healthcare Connect fund (HCF). The HCF is a federal program that funds specifically for network connectivity needs, such as covering the cost of physical appliances and connection services.

Coinciding with RWHC's own philosophy of "together, we are better", Fortinet has the same view as it connects both customers and Fortinet partners with the best network security products it has to offer.

Solution

With the creation of the Healthcare Connect Fund, RWHC ITN used this new opportunity to upgrade its existing network infrastructure with Fortinet. Previously being a customer meant that RWHC was already a member of Fortinet's camp of superior network solutions. This was not only due to the fact that they discovered Fortinet was the most certified vendor, relative to those they examined, but also because features that come standard with Fortinet products were greatly valued In the RFP process. IPS and DLP are features of maintaining HIPAA compliance to NIST standards.

Each hospital is outfitted with dual FortiGate-300C, 110C, or 200D for local security on site. Future plans include installing two FortiGate-1000Cs paired in HA mode to protect their datacenter and patient information. This is due to a need to increase equipment capacity for the datacenter as more facilities take advantage of the Healthcare Connect Fund. This "hot site" carrying the datacenter would expand to cover connections from 10MB to 1G connection at an offsite storage location. The ability to provide so many different functionalities in a single box allowed a "minimalist, but in a good way" approach that competitors couldn't match according to David Chitwood. "A solution from Cisco would end up requiring multiple devices and only one terminating device is funded through HCF."

Success

Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative was looking not only for a solution for the network, but for its personnel as well. While the numbers indicative of the products performance certainly matched up with requirements, the motivation was to find a solution that would also reduce overall drain on a small team's IT and financial resources. "Ultimately, Fortinet offered the option to do so many things on a single device they stood out as our solution; FW, IPS, IVS, and DLM." shared David. Based on unique requirements, such as strict funding from the government, operating as a non-profit, and strict certification and compliance requirements required something that was going to be both "flexible and consistent" which Fortinet's solution provided for RWHC ITN.