



# Madison Parish: Simplifying Rural Health Complexities

Running a hospital and two health clinics in rural Louisiana is not without its challenges — whether it's related to billing systems or working to gain insights into financial data.

Mindy Hinkie, the Revenue Cycle Director at Madison Parish in Tallulah, Louisiana, recognized that her organization needed a better solution. Hinkie, along with RHC billing Supervisor Becky Sargent, oversees the revenue cycle at two clinics and at an associated hospital.

The Madison Parish team knew that every minute they spent transitioning backend data and systems was a minute they took away from the patient experience. The team explored options and decided to turn to Azalea Health to streamline billing and operations, enable electronic prescriptions, customize provider documentation and access valuable dashboard data, all with a competitive investment.

In January 2019, the team went live with billing reporting through Azalea at the clinics and, in 2021, at the hospital. The move turned out to be timely, given the healthcare industry's ongoing nationwide staffing shortage that began before the COVID-19 pandemic and has since accelerated.

While hospitals nationwide have been grappling with a staffing shortage, the crisis has been more acutely felt in rural hospitals.

According to [an analysis from the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond](#), hospitals across the country have 105,000 fewer workers than they did in February 2020, representing a roughly 2% decline.

Some rural hospitals have had to scale back their services because of the staffing shortage. Turning to technology offsets the staffing shortage by minimizing the time staff members need to review electronic health records (EHR), streamlining the billing process and giving unprecedented insights into patient records.

## The path to change

Both the clinics and the hospital transitioned in about two to three months, and the teams quickly familiarized themselves with the new interface.

The team watched tutorial videos, set up the inventory side to fit their needs, and worked concurrently with their counterparts at Azalea to help streamline the process.

Transitioning to a new system required the team to transfer and validate the data and test uploading claims. Because the team began with the clinic side, they applied learnings from the ambulatory side to accelerate progress in the hospital.

They then switched clearinghouses to one that had an interface with Azalea.

***"Because we're a rural health clinic, we have a lot of unique challenges with billing, coding and splitting," Hinkie said. The Azalea system "can handle the complexities of rural health settings – enabling us to bill the way we have to for different scenarios."***



## A single medical record

For Madison Parish, the goal was to move to a single medical record, which would allow it to send bills as needed. To do so required two separate programs — the chart access of EHR and the Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) system — to talk to one another.

***“We had a broken system before, so we had to constantly update and upgrade,” Hinkie said. “There were tons of challenges that Azalea has addressed. Their clinic package is the best on the market.”***

Transitioning to one medical record for both the hospital and the clinic further enhances the patient experience. It allows medical teams to spend less time reviewing records and more time with patients.

“Soon, we will have one medical record between the ambulatory and hospital side, which will be fabulous because we won’t have to walk papers across the street from the ER to the clinic, fax or email them,” Hinkie said.

Helping that process was that provider documentation templates are customized per provider, with the ability to e-scribe, e-fax and view dashboard reports.

## Built for rural health operations

The Madison Parish team uses Azalea for more than reporting on the clinic side.

“It was the best decision you can make in a rural health setting,” Hinkie said.

Before making the transition, the Madison Parish

team’s system was complicated and required multiple people to finalize and process billing.

They needed to simplify the process, especially for patients with two insurance plans — one commercial and Medicaid as the secondary. The team needed a system to notify them when the primary has paid and when to bill the patient’s secondary insurance without getting bogged down in administrative tasks.

## Customization is key

At Madison Parish, the team worked with a broken system on the clinic side. The organization bought upgrades only when essential to reduce as many costs as possible.

While it saved money, they had a system that did very little. That all changed with Azalea. Ultimately, the Madison Parish team went with Azalea because of the pricing and the ease of use for provider documentation.

***“I would recommend the clinic package to anybody,” Hinkie said. “They’re able to build things the way you want them, and you’ll quickly realize it’s the best decision you can make in a rural health setting.”***

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