

# Catalyst Health Solutions Provides Comprehensive Substance Abuse Services to Their Community

## THE CHALLENGE

### Stigma reduction and payor interest

Catalyst Health Solutions' chief executive officer and facility director, Jerome Cohan, NP, and medical director, Timothy Smyth, MD, had been pain management specialists for years. However, as the opioid epidemic spread across the US—along with a better understanding of the positive effects buprenorphine had on those struggling with opioid abuse—Dr. Smyth and Nurse Cohan's interest in treating substance abuse grew. The two specialists teamed up with local providers offering substance abuse treatment services and in 2013 collaborated to form Catalyst Health Solutions.

Catalyst Health Solutions began as a small, part-time substance abuse services center offering physician attention, counseling, case management, and social services. Before 2016, they had little support at the state level. For example, insurance contracting did not exist for their services. They also faced the negative stigma of treating people who suffered from an opioid use disorder.



## CLIENT PROFILE

### Catalyst Health Solutions

**Founded:** 2013

**Location:** One clinic in Upper East Tennessee; two clinics in SW Virginia

#### Services:

A multi-disciplinary practice that provides services for opioid dependency and substance abuse and utilizes medication-assisted treatment led by a team of board-certified substance abuse specialists.

Supportive services include psychiatry, OB/GYN, individual and group counseling, and social work.

**Mission:** To provide exceptional care and resources to each patient to meet individualized treatment and recovery goals

**Vision:** Increase access to treatment through stigma reduction, education, and outreach

#### NextGen Healthcare Solutions:

NextGen® Enterprise EHR

NextGen® Enterprise PM

“Prior to 2016, a lot of those support systems didn’t exist. Many patients were self-pay or charity care, on a sliding fee scale, at reduced costs—those types of things.

“In 2016, Tennessee launched a licensure initiative to license our type of facility, which was a big first step to getting to where we are today,” said Michael Manning, MAH, BS, chief operations officer at Catalyst Health Solutions.

The licensure process offered them credibility with the state. Catalyst Health Solutions could now hold active licensure status year to year, and ultimately, open the door for payors to come onboard. Payors realized that if the state recognized their type of practice, they now had the green light to see what coverage and member benefits they could offer so people could access the services that Catalyst Health Solutions provides.

This shift in healthcare perspective led to conversations about the need for Catalyst Health Solutions to adopt an EHR and practice management platform to conduct in-house billing and report meaningful data.

## THE SOLUTION

### Practice management drives EHR implementation

Catalyst Health Solutions decided that a practice management platform would be a good initial step. In March 2019, they adopted NextGen Enterprise PM with the intention to bring on NextGen Enterprise EHR at a later date. Before NextGen Enterprise PM, their chief financial officer, Tina Cohan, ran financials through a smaller platform, which became inefficient as their patient population grew.

“When you have a small-scale practice with just a couple hundred patients, that’s not too problematic, but when you start getting towards 500–800 patients, we needed something more robust,” said Manning.

The practice management platform enables them to access meaningful patient demographic data, structure their patient census better, implement a more patient-centric accounts receivable (A/R) system, and open the door for electronic billing and claims submission.

### Paper becomes a thing of the past

Catalyst Health Solutions sees on average 1,000 patients annually. That number may seem low given the number of providers they have, but the amount of attention each client needs is much higher than, for example, simply providing an annual eye exam.

“If you were to come in today to our practice and admitted into our program, you would come in once a week for at least six weeks. You would see your provider—whether it be a nurse practitioner or a physician—you would see your case manager and counselor. You’d have a urine drug screening and other services identified through your individual treatment plan. It’s a pretty intensive program, even though it’s outpatient,” said Manning.

When they adopted NextGen Enterprise EHR, their paper forms were customized and dropped into the new system to remain consistent and efficient.

## HIGHLIGHTS



**Customized** forms for specialized substance abuse treatment services



**Individualized** treatment plans are easily shared across the care team



**Streamlined** referral process to appropriate care facilities

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*Michael Manning, MAH, BS  
Chief Operations Officer  
Catalyst Health Solutions*

“Our auditors, if they pull a paper record from pre-NextGen [Enterprise EHR] and then pull records from the current [system], there would be similarity in how things are documented. Our mindset with the organization was to help the auditors and make it more comfortable for providers because they’re familiar with what they’re looking at,” said Manning.

The ability to view data without flipping through a paper chart and shuffling paper has been a big win for Catalyst Health Solutions. Providers can log in to a chart, pull up the category section, and immediately know how many drug screens a patient has had—which makes cross-referencing with compliance standards and protocols much simpler.

## THE IMPACT

### Better care coordination

With a single EHR, individualized treatment plans can easily be shared. When a counselor or caseworker completes documentation for patients, they can distribute it to the whole care team. All invested care professionals can now be on the same page as far as treatment planning and progress.

“I think it really comes back to communication. That’s the biggest improvement,” said Manning. “Say the provider wanted to see the treatment plan from six months ago—before the EHR, we’d have to retrieve that chart; we’d have to pull up the treatment plan. If the provider was working remotely or in a different office, we’d have to scan that in and send it. That accessibility of the patient record has been an improvement.”

### Sharing health data with their community

Catalyst Health Solutions has focused on community collaboration since day one. For example, for patients who have open Department of Children Services (DCS) cases, the staff can share those records efficiently through the EHR to those who request/need them.

“It’s a lot easier to click and download a PDF than it is to scan in a paper record and make sure it looks presentable—not crooked or sideways. It’s easier to share records with people that are helping these patients. We have patients who are in the parole and probation system, who are doing well, but have check-ins that are required,” said Manning.

Catalyst Health Solutions has also experienced a better pathway to refer patients to higher levels of treatment. For example, if someone needs the services of a residential program.

“It’s so much easier to share those medical records and quantify them—to know what we’re looking for, grabbing everything, and sending them over. That’s been a big benefit as well,” said Manning.

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## What the future holds

“What we want to do is fill in the gaps that exist. Some of the big gaps in our area are people accessing treatment while incarcerated, discharge planning, post-incarceration, and making sure people are connected with services when they leave the jail system.

“We also want to be able to champion and bring more awareness to stimulant abuse, such as methamphetamine abuse. We see a lot of that in our area and there’s really not a payor pathway that exists for that formally. There’s not a lot of agreement on treatment protocols,” said Manning.

Virginia—where Catalyst Health Solutions has two clinics—has formally recognized their services as OBOT (Office Based Opiate Treatment). Recently, Virginia has changed that analogy to OBAT (Office Based Addiction Treatment), which broadens the horizon for those eligible for substance abuse treatment services.

“An addiction medicine specialist isn’t limited to opioids. There are addictions of all sorts, any substances, materials, habits, whatever it might be. Virginia has expanded that umbrella a little bit and we hope to continue to champion that and aid patients who are challenged with more than just an opioid issue,” said Manning.

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*Michael Manning, MAH, BS Chief Operations Officer Catalyst Health Solutions*

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