



CASE STUDY



SPECIALTY / PEDIATRIC

Rhinogram Helps S.C. Pediatrics Practice Communicate the Way Parents Prefer



Christopher Ollic
Director of Operations

Sweetgrass Pediatrics
Summerville, SC

QUICK FACTS

Six locations in greater Charleston, SC

22 pediatricians and seven nurse practitioners

One of the largest pediatric Medicaid providers in the state

Patients newborn to eighteen

CHALLENGES



Lack of a centralized process for scheduling, refills, and patient inquiries



Inability to communicate in a way patients prefer



Heavy burden on scheduling department

Expanding Services, Offering Convenience

Parents whose children are patients at Sweetgrass Pediatrics know that staff are always available to answer questions, make appointments and put their minds at ease about the health of their kids.

With six locations in the greater Charleston, SC area, Sweetgrass is one of the state's largest pediatric Medicaid providers and participates in a patient-centered medical home (PCMH), which requires an extraordinary level of patient access. Sweetgrass Pediatrics began using the Rhinogram secure messaging platform in May 2018 to allow parents to text the practice with appointment requests, clinical questions, refill requests and medical records.

During the first ten months of use, text volume has risen three fold, with no increase in staffing. Christopher Ollic, director of operations at Sweetgrass Pediatrics, says that the level of engagement with parents has increased through more timely communications. And during the first two months of 2019, 479 new contacts have come on board, evidence that, given the opportunity to text versus call, people prefer to text.

"Offering text communications met a need, and our patients love it," Ollic says. "We want to expand our service so patients know it's there and is a quick and easy way to communicate with the practice. Many parents think about texting before making a phone call."

Rhinogram "a game changer"

Sweetgrass Pediatrics prides itself on patient and parent satisfaction, day in and day out. That includes offering online scheduling and weekend hours at certain locations for sick visits. Although the practice has six locations, it operates as one, with centralized functions such as a triage department that routes incoming requests. Ollic says requests were previously fulfilled within about five hours. However, with Rhinogram, they have been able to maintain their high level of responsiveness, with an average response time of seven minutes to incoming messages.

Before Rhinogram, nearly all transactions were phone based, with callers having to leave voicemail messages with clinical questions and medical records requests. Of course, someone had to listen to messages, then answer or forward them to another team member. Managers had no insight into how many people were leaving messages and how messages were being handled.

"Rhinogram has been a game changer because we can meet parents' needs without them having to call," Ollic says. "They get a response within a few minutes, versus playing phone tag or waiting hours for a reply."



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RESULTS



One number ensures that messages reach the right person/department



Streamlined scheduling workflow allows for better customer service



Communicating with parents in a more timely fashion

When the practice started exploring new, more effective ways to communicate, it landed on the Rhinogram solution that offers a HIPAA-compliant, unified communications platform. “Appointments, clinical questions, medical records, billing—we can text with patients for all of that,” Ollic says. “One person does just text scheduling and another triages clinical questions, with physician approval. Clarifications about EOBs or statements go to the medical billing records manager.”

Rhinogram provisions the office phone number, making it textable, so both phone calls and texts can be answered. Texts arrive at a central inbox, where front desk staff handles appointment requests and routes other texts to the appropriate team member, with clinical questions going to the on-call nurse, for example.

Timely Response in a Secure Manner

Parents consent to receive texts, as is required under HIPAA, and all messages are archived in an auditable patient communication record. Managers have access to an analytics dashboard showing message volume, response times, and patient behaviors.

In the ten months since going live with Rhinogram in May 2018, Sweetgrass is averaging 8,600 text-based communications monthly. Since one person can have several text conversations in the time it takes to make one phone call, scheduling workflows have greatly improved. What’s more, parents are getting their questions answered more quickly.

“Anecdotally, Rhinogram makes it easier for staff to function day to day. It’s certainly lessened the burden in the scheduling department,” Ollic says. “We haven’t reduced staff, but we are able to provide better customer service to each individual patient.”

Promoting this new communications option has been a combination of word-of-mouth, mentions on appointment cards, office signage, social media and a patient email blast. Ollic says the practice staff are happy to spread the word, because it makes their jobs easier.

“The staff love it, too. Staff use it when scheduling for their own children. It’s just an easier method of communication.”

Ollic says that Rhinogram streamlines communications between the practice and parent, a competitive advantage in the Sweetgrass service area. “We’re thrilled with it and get compliments every day,” Ollic says of Rhinogram. “This is a great service for us.”

SELECT DATA



Text volume tripled from implementation through February 2019, from 6,000 to 18,000 texts per month



Average response time to incoming messages is seven minutes



In January and February 2019, Sweetgrass received 479 new inbound contacts through Rhinogram

rhinogram

Rhinogram’s HIPAA-compliant telehealth platform enables a better patient experience by making convenient remote care possible, simplifying communication, and minimizing interruptions with real-time, text-based patient engagement.

Text or call us at 423.800.7644 [Rhinogram.com](https://rhinogram.com)