



# Improving care for those without

With the American healthcare system in crisis, those who live at poverty or low-income levels know all too well that health insurance is becoming an unobtainable luxury. However, the community-based and family-focused healthcare provider, Gaston Family Health Services (GFHS), has made it their mission to care for more than just their patient's health. Critical to their mission and the quality and quantity of service they provide to their patients, was having reliable and efficient technology solutions in place.

## At a glance



Gaston Family Health Services

### Industry

Healthcare

### Customer

55,000 patients served/year

600 employees; 23 locations across 5 counties

Large rural population

Focus on uninsured/underinsured

### Challenges

Multiple, remote locations

Frequent network outages

Lack of visibility/reporting

Outdated phone system

### Solutions

SD-WAN Concierge™

CCaaS/UCaaS

Dual-access fiber and broadband

### Results

Patient satisfaction

Superior reliability

Network visibility/monitoring/reporting

Staff productivity

## Patient-centered care

Gaston Family Health Services (GFHS) is a community-based, federally-qualified healthcare provider with headquarters in Gastonia, North Carolina. Established in 1991, GFHS was formed to address the needs of the growing uninsured population and the use of episodic emergency department care as an inappropriate substitute for primary care. For many of their patients today, the 'Family' part of the GFHS name carries as much significance as the full range of services they provide including medical, dental, behavioral health, pharmacy and school-based health services. Demand for services at their 20+ clinics is high and growing, and when GFHS's network failed to provide the 100% uptime they needed, GFHS turned to Windstream Enterprise for a solution that ensured a no fail experience for patients, and visibility into their network's performance.

## Diagnosis: poor network visibility and lack of reliability

With a growing demand for medical, dental and behavioral health services within the communities they serve, GFHS was plagued by a network slowness due in part to the fact that their systems were riding on low bandwidth T1 technology.

***“Technology changes so rapidly, and in the healthcare industry it’s imperative to have a partner that will keep you informed of the latest technology changes that support our patient-centric mission. Windstream Enterprise has been that partner for GFHS.”***

Sena Ocloo  
CIO

Access to current patient information was mission critical, and frequent lapses in network connectivity with no redundancy meant that patient care would suffer, and that is an unacceptable position when so many in the community are counting on their services. With a small IT team of only six people serving all 23 locations, CIO Sena Ocloo and his team were at a distinct disadvantage. “Technology changes so rapidly, and in the healthcare industry, the failure to stay current with where technology is headed means a failure to meet our commitment to deliver a truly caring and compassionate patient-centered experience.”

Clinics would call to report a slowdown in the network, put in a trouble ticket and then wait 15 minutes or more while the IT team tried to figure out the problem. Without network visibility or reporting, the team was ‘flying blind,’ applying short-term ‘band-aid’ fixes to one problem until another one surfaced.

Patient access was also compromised by GFHS’ outdated Windstream hosted PBX phone system that could no longer support current demands, let alone those anticipated with future growth and new locations. With old phone technology in their call center, GFHS had no way of measuring call volumes, number of callers in queue, hold and wait times, and abandoned calls—all metrics essential to understanding and improving the patient experience. In combination with the network issues, GFHS was not well placed to provide the quality of service that their patients and employees deserved.

## Treatment: SD-WAN, UCaaS/CCaaS

An unrelated issue led to a meeting between Windstream Enterprise (WE) and Sena where he described the full extent of the problems GFHS was facing. WE listened attentively and began to map out some possible solutions, starting with upgrading the existing T1s to fiber and adding a cable broadband back-up to provide the much-needed network redundancy and reliability. Today, each clinic is fed by fiber and calls from the clinics about network slowness are non-existent.

Knowing how important visibility and reporting were to GFHS, a WE account representative scheduled an SD-WAN demo for Sena who was immediately impressed with SD-WAN’s reporting functionality, and the network-wide visibility with application-level monitoring and reporting capability. When problems do arise, GFHS can rapidly identify and just as quickly rectify network issues from the convenience of the SD-WAN Management Tool’s self-service portal.

To address the phone system issues, Windstream Enterprise’s Unified Communications as a Service (UCaaS) and Contact Center as a Service (CCaaS) solutions have been overlaid on SD-WAN to add unprecedented functionality and customization to their voice system. With CCaaS, the GFHS call center makes it easier for customers to schedule appointments, and GFHS gets valuable reports that detail the patient experience at different engagement points in their journey.

## Recovery and beyond

While Windstream Enterprise’s solutions have put GFHS solidly on the road to recovery, Sena has noticed one of the early benefits are productivity improvements across his team. “With Windstream Enterprise SD-WAN in place, our IT team spends significantly less time chasing and fixing network issues and are now able to focus on projects designed to improve our patient experience.”

In addition to technology, Sena attributes the relationship with Windstream Enterprise’s team as a significant factor in the success GFHS is seeing. “Our working relationship is one of the most valuable aspects of partnering with Windstream Enterprise. I can count on them to keep me informed of the latest technology changes, and how they can improve GFHS’ patient-centric performance. “Technology is certain to change, and with WE as a trusted advisor, Gaston Family Health Services will be the first to learn about the latest solutions to help them provide the highest level of care in their communities.

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