

PROMISING PRACTICES



Maine service provider enhances billing efficiencies

Part 1 of a 2-part series

Kennebec Behavioral Health's 330 staff members and 4 clinics serve 12,000 Maine consumers. In December 2010, the service provider achieved three-year [CARF](#) accreditation with several commendations, including one for its billing application.

By Thomas J. McAdam, Kennebec Behavioral Health

[Kennebec Behavioral Health](#) (KBH) has created a billing application that saves hours of staff time by automatically extracting billable service data from the service provider's client electronic medical records (EMR) and turning the data into bills and reports.

The service provider's IT staff designed and implemented the application, which is called VIBE (for Versatile Intelligent Billing Engine), in fourteen months from conception to rollout, according to Tim A. Beaucage, KBH's chief information officer.

In technical terms, VIBE is a software application written primarily in C# (C Sharp) using Microsoft® Visual Studio® Integrated Development Environment. In implementation, VIBE saves time, provides data integrity, and has helped drive the provider to success.

Here's how VIBE works: On demand, it extracts billable information from an internally designed database. VIBE validates the data, creates invoices, and assembles the bills that can be manually printed and mailed. VIBE also handles payment processing, allowing payments to be entered on all outstanding invoices. Many of KBH's claims are state of Maine remittances, which VIBE permits the provider to process in bulk -- and quickly.

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"This is a huge time saver," Beaucage said. "Consider the option of processing more than 5,000 individual claims on a \$500,000 remittance by hand, one at a time."

He continues, "We needed VIBE because we are data hungry and always seeking for system efficiencies."

The strategic yet unconventional decision to build its own EMR and billing application was made five years ago. After conducting a cost-benefit analysis, KBH concluded that the cost of a vendor-based application versus one of its own was a wash financially.

Moving forward, the proprietary application was based on two critical factors: First, its application must reduce the administrative burden on KBH's clinical staff. Second, the system must be adaptable and modifiable, based on the changing needs of the provider's clients and shifts in the political and financial landscapes.

Staff members say the system has not only helped improve KBH's core delivery, but it has also been a major contributor to the service provider's financial health.

In the next issue of [BH Promising Practices](#), KBH's innovative response to a collapsing news industry will be featured.

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