



**LUTHERAN HOMES OF SOUTH CAROLINA:**

# Enhancing Care with Real-Time Infection Control Tracking





Lutheran Homes of South Carolina owns and operates four skilled nursing facilities across the state. The organization struggled to manage its infection control program manually, using a cumbersome system and hard copies of manuals. Data was tracked on a series of spreadsheets, and compiling that information meant that the Senior Clinical Director would have to visit the individual facilities, all of which were hours away from one another, or the reports would have to be scanned and faxed.

## AT A GLANCE

**Name:** Lutheran Homes of South Carolina

**Type:** Skilled nursing      **Founded:** 1989      **Number of facilities:** 4

**ABILITY success:** Proactively enacting infection control

Senior Clinical and Operations Director April Hampton, who oversees the Lutheran Homes infection control programs, remembers traveling hours to each facility to gather information. “I would have to go to each facility, which are a couple hours apart. Doing so would take me about a week.”

Tracking McGeer criteria happened on paper, using a large book to look up the criteria. Algorithms had to be run through by hand, which was a time-consuming process. Within the facilities, clinical employees would create hand-drawn maps to help with tracking infections.

## Transitioning to real-time, automated tracking

That difficult tracking system changed when Lutheran Homes decided to implement tracking with ABILITY INFECTIONWATCH. The application allowed the organization to streamline its infection control process, be more proactive in fighting infections and find more time to focus on resident care. Time that used to be spent tracking numbers on spreadsheets, running data through the McGeer algorithms and traveling between sites can now be allocated elsewhere because the information Hampton and her team need to monitor infections is readily available. More importantly, the availability of the data allows Lutheran Homes' facilities to spot outbreaks early and be proactive in enacting an infection control protocol.



**I'm able to call the director of nursing and recommend that we put an improvement plan in place. ABILITY INFECTIONWATCH has assisted in catching things and allowing us to be more proactive versus reactive.**

APRIL HAMPTON

*Lutheran Homes of South Carolina senior clinical and operations director*



Hampton runs reports once per week to oversee infection tracking. With ABILITY INFECTIONWATCH, she is able to customize her platform to look at the organization as a whole, individual facilities or even at patients' statistics. The dashboard puts McGeer criteria at the forefront for easier monitoring. Facilities can set their own infection thresholds, and if any of these thresholds are reached, an "alert" icon will appear if there are warning signs of a potential outbreak.

"We have four skilled facilities. I can look at each one remotely. I can see what everyone is doing, how they are entering infections, and if we are seeing any trends," Hampton explained.

Another benefit of ABILITY INFECTIONWATCH, according to Hampton, is that it walks nurses through the McGeer criteria when they are evaluating residents. The application places criteria in a simple format that allows nurses to check off boxes to log patient symptoms, reducing the potential for human error.

## Monitoring infections during the pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought additional infection control requirements for SNFs, and facilities are being inspected more regularly. Hampton said this would have been difficult under their previous system, as facilities would have been left to sift through paperwork to find the appropriate data for surveyors. During a recent visit by infection control surveyors, the staff was easily able to pull and print out the reports they needed using the ABILITY INFECTIONWATCH application.

“If we were still on paper, we would have had to do more scrambling as far as pulling the information that the surveyors needed. ABILITY INFECTIONWATCH helped us pull the reports that we needed,” Hampton said.



**ABILITY INFECTIONWATCH** played a big part in making the survey process go smoothly, not just for the facilities but for the surveyors as well.

**APRIL HAMPTON**

*Lutheran Homes of South Carolina senior clinical and operations director*



ABILITY INFECTIONWATCH also eases the time-consuming tasks of infection control during a pandemic. Staff members simply enter in symptoms, diagnoses and treatments. The application maps those infections and alerts staff if there is a risk of an outbreak. It also tracks the information that has been reported to government agencies, so facilities can easily track reporting requirements.

As a result, the time saved in tracking, monitoring and reporting infections is better spent caring for patients, Hampton said.

## Implementing ABILITY INFECTIONWATCH

Hampton noted the transition to ABILITY INFECTIONWATCH was relatively seamless. Patient data was integrated into the application, and an ABILITY implementation team helped get everything up and running. While some members of the nursing staff were hesitant to make the change, Hampton said the system is now widely accepted and appreciated. And ABILITY is always quick to answer any questions or address any concerns.

“You’re able to click a link, send your question in, and immediately ABILITY reaches out. When we submit a help ticket, we get a response within 24 hours. On a scale of 1 to 10, I would give a 10,” she said.





## **With ABILITY INFECTIONWATCH, Lutheran Homes of South Carolina has been able to:**

- Monitor infection data from four facilities across the state on one dashboard
- Save time by eliminating paper mapping and entering algorithms manually
- Quickly implement infection control plans when needed
- Pull the reports needed for pandemic infection control surveys
- Devote more staff time to resident care



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