

# Case Study: Electronic Prescriptions for Controlled Substances Streamline Processes, Reduce Errors, and Drive Efficiencies



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## Categories:

- ◆ ePrescribing/  
Medication Ordering

### About the Organization

#### Organization Name:

Rouse Estate

#### Main Contributor:

Jessica Benjamin, Director of Health Information and Person-Centered Services

#### Organization Type:

Skilled Nursing Facilities, Adult Day Care, Memory Care, Home Care

#### Organization Description:

Rouse, Warren County, Pennsylvania's leader in caring for generations, specializes in skilled nursing home care, rehabilitation, personal care, adult day services, and child day care. In each of its five facilities, care is delivered to individuals based on their needs and wishes, rather than following an institutional schedule. Rouse consistently strives to maintain a culture of exceeding the expectations of its customers, their families, and their employees.

### Project Description

The Rouse had PointClickCare in place for a while but was not using it to its full capabilities. In 2019, Jessica Benjamin, Director of Health Information and Person Centered Services, joined Rouse Estate. She wanted to increase use of the PointClickCare platform to improve workflows and, in turn, make life more comfortable for residents. In addition, in 2018, Pennsylvania passed a law that mandated that all Schedule II, III, IV, and V controlled substances be prescribed electronically—no more paper prescription pads or faxes. Rouse Estate needed to adopt Electronic Prescriptions for Controlled Substances (EPCS) quickly before the law went into effect in October 2019.

### Implementation Approach

Rouse still had many paper-based processes in place. Nobody knew how to streamline those processes, reduce staff's workloads, and move all of it into PointClickCare. Within PointClickCare itself, there were a lot of features that staff didn't know existed. Benjamin didn't have experience with PointClickCare, so she spent a lot of time on SmartZone, PointClickCare's online training portal. She used the help files and relied on the PointClickCare Pulse online community to help her get up to speed. She used this knowledge to take a much more detailed look at the system and found [PointClickCare's EPCS solution](#). EPCS is a special instance of ePrescribing that provides pharmacies, hospitals, and practitioners a mechanism to use technology for controlled substance prescriptions. This replaces the paper, fax, email, and phone processes for placing prescription orders.

Benjamin pitched the idea of implementing EPCS to the Rouse leadership team. Once they saw how the solution could improve their process—and ensure compliance with the new law—they were on board. Because EPCS was a part of their existing system, the decision to move forward was a no-brainer. There were no objections or pushback from Rouse's medical providers, which says a lot about how antiquated the existing process was.

There are no added fees for EPCS since it is included with PointClickCare's Integrated Medication Management (IMM) module. There is a one-time payment for professional services. In the long run, that adds up to significant cost savings.

Even though using EPCS wasn't a difficult change, it still disrupted a process that had been in place for decades. Training primarily consisted of showing nurses how to enter the right order type on controlled substances. Implementation was surprisingly

easy, and Benjamin continued to monitor the controlled substances to verify that the orders entered the previous day were done correctly. She made sure everyone was comfortable with the process and that it was second nature to them.

## Outcomes

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Moving to EPCS has improved workflows for doctors, nurses, and even pharmacists. Instead of having to get paper prescriptions from the physician, or the physicians calling the pharmacy with those orders, they can now do everything electronically. That's a big time saver.

Rouse is also more confident that once the physician signs that prescription, the pharmacist will see it without having to check a fax machine. They no longer have to hunt down faxes or try to decipher handwriting, because everything appears in their system automatically in a standardized format to ensure clarity and accuracy. Perhaps the biggest time saver is that the system does automatic checks for medication conflicts with other medications a resident is taking, or potential allergies that could be a problem with the prescribed medication. This provides an extra layer of safety for residents.

In addition to implementing EPCS, The Rouse is using PointClickCare's Discharge Orders solution for the transmission of electronic discharge orders to the resident's pharmacy of choice. About 90% of their discharge orders are now done electronically. They have shaved about five minutes off of each order, and while this may not sound like a lot, over the course of a 12-hour shift, those minutes add up for nurses and physicians. Every minute saved by not having to manually fill out prescription orders is another minute that can be spent at a patient's bedside. They also have more time to spend on progress notes, ensuring better continuity of care.

## Challenges and Pitfalls to Avoid

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Before implementing [EPCS](#), when physicians came in every day, they were greeted with a huge stack of papers to address, many of them prescription requests. Prescription orders were entered into PointClickCare, but staff still had to wait for the physician to fill them out and sign them. Next, staff would fax them to the pharmacy and follow up with a call to confirm receipt of the fax. Rouse strived to get medications back the same day, but that didn't always happen. Sometimes faxes would fail and need to be re-sent, which was time-consuming and inefficient.

Another challenge for the organization has to do with its rural location. Orders that don't get in by 5:00 p.m. don't make the last pharmacy run for the day, which means residents go another day without the medications they need.

## Lessons Learned

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Thanks to EPCS, The Rouse and their providers are in compliance with the Pennsylvania state mandate, potentially saving everyone costly penalties. Rouse anticipates that a similar act will eventually be implemented on a federal level, and once it is, the stakes will be a lot higher. By implementing EPCS early, Rouse won't be caught on the back foot later. In the meantime, staff doesn't have to worry about signature forgeries for prescriptions, illegibility, or manual data entry mistakes that could delay the delivery of medication.

Making the move to EPCS and electronic Discharge Orders was necessary, not only to improve the workflow for nurses and physicians, but to move the organization forward on the path to modernization. Eliminating manual processes greatly reduces the risk of error and eliminates one more administrative task, allowing staff to do the work they love most.

By adopting these PointClickCare solutions, Rouse has ensured its residents are as comfortable as they can be, thereby improving their quality of life.