

## Case Study:

# Hand-Held Nurse Call System Reduces Response Time



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### CATEGORIES

- ◆ Reduced Response Time
- ◆ Increased Resident Satisfaction
- ◆ Reduced Costs

#### Organization Name:

Tuscola County Medical  
Care Community

#### Main Contributor:

Robert Cody Rabideau,  
RN, BSN, MSHAL, NHA,  
Chief Executive Officer

#### Organization Type:

Skilled nursing facility, memory  
care facility,  
small house residences

#### Organization Description:

Tuscola County Medical Care Community (TCMCC) is a 159-resident campus. TCMCC staff provides superior care for a wide variety of medical needs, including convalescence for post-operative recovery and short- or long-term illnesses, short-term rehabilitation, and memory care. The campus also includes two 10-resident small house buildings providing skilled nursing care in a family-style environment. The Tuscola County Medical Care Community has earned numerous awards, including a 5-Star rating from Medicare.

### Project Description

In 2012, Tuscola County Medical Care Community began exploring technology to improve staff and resident satisfaction with its nurse call system. TCMCC chose to work with Compass Communications Group to adopt the VisionPro wireless nurse call system. This call system evolved alongside technological advancements and, in early 2024, upgraded to VisionLink II, shifting staff notifications from pagers to smartphones. This upgrade to a familiar hand-held device gives staff a versatile communications tool and awareness of resident needs, right in their pocket.

TCMCC's existing pager system was being used for notifications, but in looking for ways to enhance staff efficiency and responsiveness to resident needs, the organization wanted more information than the pagers could provide. With resident care being top priority, a change was needed to better provide care for residents.

After looking at a few options, Tuscola County Memory Care Facility (MCF) liked the features and functionality of the VisionLink II (VLII) mobile app by Compass Communications Group. The VLII mobile app upgrades staff communication with a smartphone notification system connecting to the existing Compass VisionLink II nurse call system. With the mobile app, alerts can be sent to as few or as many smartphones as desired, displayed, and escalated until canceled at the originating nurse call device. Once the app is open, staff continue to receive the call information regardless of what else they are doing. When a staff member "accepts" a call, their team members are notified that the alert is being addressed. The VisionLink II mobile app can display the resident's name and photo with every call. Supervisors can view the names of the staff members logged into the mobile app to ensure staffing levels are met for every shift. The most popular feature of the mobile app allows staff to initiate a voice call with anyone logged into the app. The ability for TCMCC staff to communicate in real time, the additional information included in the alerts, and the accessibility of active calls give TCMCC staff a powerful tool to enhance the care given to residents.

### Safety Technology

Emergency Notification/Communication/Response System

### System Embodiment

Smartphone app integration with wireless call system

### Business Model

Standard of care

## Implementation Approach

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To implement the VLII mobile app, staff were given smartphones provided by TCMCC, and set up per Compass and information technology department specifications. They do not connect to the internet or have cellular service. Compass offers various types of staff training for the VLII mobile app, including in-person or virtual training, training videos, and documentation. TCMCC implemented a plan to charge and maintain the smartphones. However, TCMCC staff found that because everyone has a smartphone, navigating the VLII mobile app was very easy, and little training was required for staff to feel comfortable using the mobile app for notifications from the nurse call system. Calling other staff members on the mobile app was intuitive and required little training. The voice-calling capabilities of the mobile app gave staff a new and effective way of coordinating and enhancing resident care. Partnering with Compass, TCMCC was able to implement the mobile app in less time than expected, and staff was provided a powerful new tool to enhance resident care and satisfaction.

## Outcomes

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Using the VLII mobile app, TCMCC's existing nurse call system has been greatly enhanced. Comparing pre-implementation data to measurements taken one month after implementation, we observed a 50% reduction in average call light response times. The primary change was the number of "very long" wait times of more than 20 minutes. The platform's increased ability to allow front-line staff to communicate directly with one another improved teamwork to address all lights within a more reasonable time frame.

Resident satisfaction has increased, and residents have fewer concerns with call light response times. Eliminating the one-off "very long" lights does wonders to improve resident satisfaction.

TCMCC staff have embraced the VLII mobile app. Staff appreciate being fully up to speed with all call lights right from their pockets, and they particularly enjoy the ability to communicate more directly with one another.

Some family members were concerned that staff were "on their phones." We implemented a few signs that inform residents and families that these phones are how our certified nurse aides care for their loved ones and that the nurse call system has been improved.

We have not been able to quantify a shift in safety, but the VLII mobile app gives the whole team one more tool to utilize in all community emergency responses.

Being able to address resident concerns promptly drives better outcomes. The VLII mobile app has been a valuable tool that has helped us respond to resident needs.

TCMCC has experienced a reduction in direct costs because staff honestly treat the phones better than the pagers, thus saving us money in replacement costs. Other cost savings attributable to implementing the VLII mobile app may become apparent over time.

## Challenges and Lessons Learned/Advice to Share with Others

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Although TCMCC expected monitoring and maintaining the smartphones would be challenging, that has not been the case.

TCMCC found the improved average call times and elimination of one-off long lights to be significant. Also, improved communication at the front line is greatly appreciated by those who use this tool all day long to perform their tasks. Because of all the positive results, implementing the VLII mobile app was well worth the investment.

## Testimonials

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*"Feel free to come check it out here. It's worked great for us. We reviewed lots of options, and in the end, we were happy to stay with this vendor and continue to meet resident needs with an MCF partner!" - Cody*

*"Anything that helps you serve residents better is worth the investment. This tool, without a doubt, helped us better serve our residents!" - Cody*