

Major California health system uses YouCompli to manage through the pandemic and prepare for what comes next

Managing compliance during – and after – the pandemic

In Spring 2020, a major California health system had a problem. The volume, speed, and scope of COVID-19 regulatory changes coming in from federal and state regulators were too much to handle with its existing processes. In addition, the system would have to reverse most, if not all, of these changes after the public health emergency (PHE) came to an end.

The health system didn't have a good way to find out about new regulatory changes, especially at this scale. The Compliance team didn't have a good way to communicate these changes through the organization. Nor could they see whether the necessary process changes were implemented. And, they didn't have **any** way to track which policies and procedures would need to be reinstated when the PHE expires.

YouCompli solved the problem. YouCompli gathers all the regulatory changes that mattered to the hospital system. The Compliance team used YouCompli to communicate relevant changes to department heads. The Compliance department continues to use YouCompli to monitor all changes and hospitals in the system. When the PHE expires, they will be able to work with each hospital to reinstate the old regulatory frameworks as appropriate.

The role of the Compliance department

Many healthcare providers have a decentralized model for managing regulatory compliance. That is, while the Compliance department or Chief Compliance Officer is ultimately responsible for the program, the day-to-day management of regulatory requirements is handled by individual departments.

This means that Compliance handles project management, oversight, and support. The ongoing responsibility for monitoring, interpretation, and implementation of regulatory changes and new regulations lies at the department level. In this hospital system, Revenue Cycle, Pharmacy, Laboratory and other departments take on the daily burdens. This includes tracking when regulatory changes come out, figuring out what they mean and if they matter, and making sure that practices and policies are changed appropriately.

Challenges raised by the pandemic

This model is challenging at the best of times. Most departments rely on various reference sources to make sure that they are aware when new regulations are issued or when regulations change. They patch together updates from sites such as, professional associations, regulators, and law firms, and are never sure they haven't missed something.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, this model has proven almost unworkable. The speed, number, and scope of regulatory changes was enough of a problem. The CARES Act, for example, created hundreds of changes to existing regulations and added many new regulations. It also created brand-new loan programs and oversight mechanisms. The complexity of this one piece of legislation is staggering, and changes like this were coming in regularly during the pandemic.

In addition, regulators started changing processes for announcing changes. Instead of the usual process, regulators posted regulatory changes on websites where they were not easy to find or

interpret. For example, state regulators in California issued a series of waivers to regulatory requirements for Pharmacy. Ordinarily, these would be easy to find, but these updates were posted to a separate COVID-19 webpage. Any department that didn't know the page existed would have missed the changes.

Centralizing Compliance responsibility

At this healthcare system, responsibility for staying in-the-know thus fell to the Compliance department. Compliance was asked to quickly determine the best process for managing through all the new federal and state regulations. Failure could sink the organization in increased risk and liability, all at a time when pandemic cases were threatening to do the same.

This meant that the Compliance department needed a way to:

- Track all changes, even if they were posted in unfamiliar places.
- Communicate all changes to all stakeholders who needed to know, quickly and efficiently.
- Track the process, from end to end, to be sure that there was an audit trail of what Compliance had found and who had taken responsibility.

There was also another problem. Most of the regulatory changes made during the pandemic were explicitly made as temporary measures, taken only during a time of PHE. Once the PHE ends, the regulatory changes will as well. This meant that Compliance needed to know which processes had been changed, and how, so that they could be rolled back, if necessary, to pre-pandemic levels with little notice.

The YouCompli solution

The California-based healthcare system turned to YouCompli to solve these problems. YouCompli tracks all regulations, no matter where they are posted, for all the regulators relevant to this health system's operations. Then, YouCompli's expert

Compliance professionals translate those technical legal documents into easy-to-understand business requirements. YouCompli provides tools to help the Compliance team decide which changes apply and which tasks they need to perform. This could include changing a code, filling out a form, or modifying a policy or procedure.

YouCompli also includes a “regulatory rolodex” – a comprehensive list of all stakeholders within the health system. The Compliance team can use this communication tool to assign requirements and tasks to the relevant person and department. Department heads will only be notified when their department needs to make some sort of change. Otherwise, they can focus on managing patient care.

Finally, YouCompli tracks the changes the healthcare system makes. This is important

information to have when regulator decide to roll back pandemic-era regulations. The Compliance team will use YouCompli to communicate the reversion, know what they need to do, and attest that they’ve done it.

YouCompli identifies regulatory notices when they are being sunsetted by regulators. It provides a customized series of questions that ensure the hospital is making the changes to revert all processes to pre-pandemic form. If necessary, YouCompli will even deliver the original policy to the hospital.

Empowered by YouCompli, this healthcare system has not only improved its efficiency in managing compliance, thus reducing risk and liability. It has also ensured that it has an auditable process in place to quickly change back to normal operations when the PHE ends. ●

Keep on top of regulations affecting your organization and make sure those regulations are translated into policies and procedures that affect patient care.

YouCompli customers have access to notifications about changes to regulations, resources to inform policy and procedure updates, and tools to track compliance.

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