

# symplr Collaborates with Lee Health to Create & Deliver New Capabilities



## CUSTOMER PROFILE

Lee Health, founded in 1916 and located in Southwest Florida, is the largest public health system in Florida.



**BEDS:** 1,423

### **FACILITIES & THEIR BEDS:**

Cape Coral Hospital: 291

Gulf Coast Medical Center: 356

HealthPark Medical Center: 267

Lee Memorial Hospital: 355

The Rehabilitation Hospital: 60

Golisano Children's Hospital of Southwest Florida: 101

**EMPLOYEES:** 12,000; more than 1,100 are primary care and special physicians with more than 25 office and outpatient locations

**VOLUNTEERS/AUXILIANS:** 4,500

**VENDORS:** 293 registered

**UNIQUE REPS:** 772

**REP CHECK-INS:** 21,588

Lee Health, which consistently asks more of its vendors than most comparable institutions, knows it can always depend on symplr to listen, respond, and deliver customized vendor credentialing capabilities the organization refuses to exist without.

“symplr has consistently been very open to meeting our needs. For example, developing, implementing and as importantly, maintaining certain controls that are atypical in healthcare,” says Terry Murphy, system director, Supply Chain, Lee Health. “We switched to symplr when the spirit of collaboration and flexibility as well as the customized upgrades built specifically for us by our previous supplier vanished.”

## KEY CHALLENGES

1. Vendor credentialing system lacked vital capabilities such as verification.
2. Previous provider declines system enhancements and add-ons.
3. Registered, credentialed but unverified vendors had access.
4. No proof of specific checks such as Office of Inspector General (OIG).
5. Vendor drop-ins and cold calls.
6. Impossible to track vendor reps' real-time and historical access.

## SOLUTION

symplr vendor credentialing with DART (direct appointment request tool) plus new Lee Health specific add-ons including verification.

## BENEFITS

1. symplr's comprehensive registration, credentialing and verification.
2. Delivers customized add-ons and capabilities specific to Lee Health.
3. Only registered, credentialed, compliant and verified vendors receive badges and day passes.
4. Proof of complete, current screening and sanction checks.
5. DART eliminates drop-ins and cold calls.
6. symplr reports ensure traceability and transparency.

Lee Health and symplr ensure that every person that comes on site has a legitimate, confirmed reason for their presence. Over the years, Lee Health has recognized just how vital those additional controls are, yet to this day, unlike symplr, few providers offer verification as a standard capability.

Murphy still remembers what he now refers to as his organization's real "Aha!" moment. A surgical director asked Murphy how a vendor's rep had been able to access and display her products in the surgeon's lounge since Lee Health's preferred supplier was a direct competitor. Murphy discovered that although registered and credentialed, the vendor and rep had not been verified by its then credentialing provider.

As a result, Lee Health's verification now requires vendors to submit contractual and/or pricing agreements to Cooperative Services of Florida, their clearing house, to confirm their relationship with Lee. Cooperative Services confirms, countersigns and submits the documentation to symplr for review and verification before vendors can obtain their in-compliance green light status.

"Access to Lee Health and our physicians is a privilege that we grant - it is not a right," says Murphy, who notes Lee Health shifted to an automated, digitized vendor credentialing system from its entirely manual legacy system about 10 years ago. "Vendors must confirm a pre-existing relationship with Lee Health and be on site either to support a product we already use or educate us about a product that we're considering. In our eyes, they are not here to sell us!"

As Murphy puts it, Lee Health asks no more of its vendors and their reps than of its own employees. Its 12 to 18 current vendor requirements include insurance, HIPAA agreements, vaccinations, and training, as well as such basics as an annual reread of Lee Health's code of conduct and updating certain training.

Notably, Lee Health was one of the first healthcare facilities nationwide to demand influenza shots and thanks to symplr's flexibility, the system's influenza credentialing makes it easy to grant religious or medical exemptions.

"symplr understood exactly what we were trying to do and why and (as usual) accommodated our needs," says Murphy. "Previous providers would definitely have laughed at our requests for still more requirements and exceptions."

Lee Health has both open-access and lockdown facilities; security issues really came to the fore after a robbery in a public restroom. Since committing to ever more stringent registration, credentialing and verification as well as DART, security staff and other employees don't see random visitors roaming the buildings. Every vendor must have a day pass as well as a badge. In general, reps must use DART to gain entrance, but select reps are granted exceptions, for example orthopedic suppliers who need to be on site daily.

"symplr's ability to let us adapt their system to our requirements puts us in control while recognizing that to facilitate day-to-day business, we have to work with and always be prepared for the unexpected because that's also a given," says Murphy.

Lee Health knows that initial and ongoing background, sex offender, and a variety of other checks are vital to the security of its patients, staff and visitors. When a previous provider couldn't provide proof that OIG checks had been run, Murphy had one more reason to approach symplr.

"Vendors are an extension of our staff and reflect everything we stand for," says Murphy. "My peace of mind depends on knowing those checks have been run and are updated regularly."

The transparency and visibility available with symplr's real-time dashboards and reports provide the hard data Murphy requires to best manage and control vendors. Over time, symplr's detailed data and reporting provided answers to an extraordinary array of puzzles. At a glance, Murphy can find a rep on site in real-time, or track their complete visit history with Lee Health.

The data invariably tells a fascinating tale. When an anonymous caller reported that a certain vendor's rep was non-compliant, symplr told Murphy that the rep was registered, credentialed, compliant and using DART. However, it also became apparent she visited more frequently than her single drug and its simple administration required.

With tangible evidence the rep was taking advantage of Lee Health and its systems, Murphy revisited Lee Health's expectations of their vendors and reps with her.

While Lee Health requires vendors to don scrubs to access restricted areas, such as the OR, cath and endovascular labs, it also stipulates they change out of them before leaving Lee Health's premises. Yet staff's Facebook posts regularly feature non-employees sporting Lee Health scrubs in a variety of unexpected locations, such as local bars and other public spaces. Murphy himself has bumped into scrubs-wearers in his dentist's waiting room as well as various lobbies.

As flattering as it may be that people want to be associated with Lee Health, the unauthorized and inappropriate wearing of scrubs is a serious issue. Not only do people assume the scrubs wearers represent or are affiliated with Lee Health, there are enormous costs associated with the loss of the scrubs themselves from the facilities.

"symplr's traceability gives Lee Health the ultimate in transparency," says Murphy. "Anyone wearing Lee Health uniforms offsite is violating our policy and will receive a sanction letter, but after the third warning, they will be banned in order to protect our image in the community and manage operating costs."

Thanks to symplr, Murphy also managed to solve yet another mystery. A cardiology rep who supported pacemakers received a proxy card to give him access to different areas of the facility outside of regular business hours. Yet symplr showed unofficial multiple, ongoing late night and weekend visits that didn't make any sense until Murphy learned his girlfriend worked in that department.

"The exponential increase in the quantity and quality of the data gathered continues to pay off for us," says Murphy, who discovers and improves his use of various symplr features, including the dashboards and reports, by attending their user group meetings. "symplr's product continuously evolves to better meet our needs because they listen and act on our feedback."