



Web site helps those who serve developmentally disabled

The Republican American, March 8, 2010

A RESOURCE FOR CAREGIVERS

Service agencies, parents of disabled rave about Web site

BY MARC SILVESTRINI

WATERBURY

James M. Kelly of Woodbury is not only the vice chairman of Waterbury-based Therap Services LLC, he's also a customer.

Kelly is also president of Community Options Inc., a Waterbury-based company that operates several group homes and manages day programs for people with developmental disabilities. In all, Community Options serves about 290 developmentally disabled clients throughout the state and employs more than 300 people.

Kelly says the services offered by Therap Services have helped Community Options save about \$20,000 per year in copying costs.

"That's a pretty significant sum, especially when you consider that money is pretty tight in the social services field these days, like it is in most industries," he said.

DIGITAL RECORDS

Therap Services developed and maintains a Web-based information, documentation and communications system for those who provide services to people with developmental disabilities.

There are an estimated 4.3 million people in the United States with developmental disabilities, according to Richard Robbins, Therap's chairman and chief executive officer. The developmentally disabled were previously referred to as mentally retarded.

Therap's Web-based system enables service providers, service managers, health professionals, and regulators to log, record and track everything that happens to their developmentally disabled clients, including the medications they receive, daily staff reports, health summaries, injury reports, and billing information. The system also helps care providers collaborate and communicate with other staff members, state personnel, and a client's family.

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In short, Therap offers care providers an easy, efficient HIPAAcompliant alternative to the immense amount of paperwork and manual record-keeping they would otherwise be obligated to complete.

“We help caregivers record, track and share information about their developmentally disabled clients,” said Justin M. Brockie of Wolcott, the first employee hired by Therap and now the company’s chief operating officer. “We help them report and record everything that happens in the lives of the people they’re caring for.”

The Therap system can track and record everything about a patient from blood glucose levels to blood pressure readings to weight gains and losses, enabling physicians, caregivers and even family members to track and monitor a developmentally disabled person’s care and progress even from remote location, as long as they have access to the Internet.

“We just love it, it’s a great way for us to keep track of what’s going on in our daughter’s life,” said Tom Rose of Cheshire, who, along with his wife, Maureen, uses Therap’s Web site to keep close track of his 25-year-old daughter, who lives in a group home in Middlebury.

“Every morning when I wake up, the first thing I do is log into that site to check and see how she’s slept through the night, what she’s been eating, what kinds of activities she’s going to be doing that day,” Rose said. “My wife and I use it all the time. It’s a great way of keeping a close eye on what and how she’s doing.”

BANGLADESH AND NEPAL

Therap, which is based in a 4,000square-foot office on Watertown Avenue, serves a client base made up of about 400 for-profit, not-for-profit, and state and government agencies in 43 states and two Canadian provinces that service the developmentally disabled. Those 400 agencies serve about 40,000 clients and employ about 40,000 people, Robbins said.

In three states — Delaware, Montana and North Dakota — all private agencies that contract with the state to provide services to the developmentally disabled are now required to use forms generated by Therap when they report incidents to the state.



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“Waterbury-based Therap Services is the national leader in providing documentation for providers of services to people with developmental disabilities. From left, Therap Services Vice Chairman James M. Kelly, Chief Operating Officer Justin M. Brockie and Chairman Richard A. Robbins.”

Therap’s Web-based service is also being used in Bangladesh and Nepal.

The company has about 100 employees worldwide, most of whom are software engineers who design, develop and test new software applications. Therap, on the average, revises, improves or updates its software about every six weeks, Kelly said.

“It’s really a very useful and effective tool,” said Stan Soby, vice president of community programs for The Connecticut Institute for the Blind/Oak Hill. “We’re responsible for the well being of a lot of people and we’re very pleased with the service Therap provides. The response from our care providers and staff members who use the system every day has been unanimously positive.”

Founded in 1893, Oak Hill serves about 550 blind and disabled adults and children every day in more than 100 locations across the state. It is the largest private nonprofit community provider of services for people with disabilities in Connecticut.

Therap was launched in July 2003, when Robbins and Kelly, old friends who had known and worked with each other on a number of previous business ventures, got together in an attempt to “bring modern technological capabilities to the social services field,” Kelly said.



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Kelly, a Greater Waterbury native, and Robbins, who is a native of and still lives in New York City, first met in the early 1980s at a symposium in Massachusetts, when both were working with developmentally disabled children. Today, almost 30 years later, they have teamed up to offer the community that surrounds developmentally disabled children and adults — their caregivers, their physicians and nurses, their families and loved ones — a new information and communications tool. A tool that helps social service agencies reduce their costs — less paperwork, less time spent in meetings, less time spent on the road driving from facility to facility, reduced administrative time — while providing families of developmentally disabled individuals with faster access to information about their loved ones .

“It’s a wonderful service, it really is,” said Lisette Authier of Thompson, who, along with her husband, Rob, uses the Therap system to “keep close tabs” on her developmentally disabled sister-in-law. Rob Authier’s sister lives in a group home in Windsor, more than an hour’s drive from Thompson.

“It makes it so much easier for my husband and I to know what’s happening with her and keep an eye on how things are going,” Authier said. “With this system, we always know where she’s going, who she’s seeing, what medications she’s taking...

everything. It’s really pretty neat.”



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“
From left, James M. Kelly, Richard A. Robbins and Justin M. Brockie of Therap Services have developed a Web site that not only helps social service agencies reduce their costs, but also provides families of developmentally disabled individuals with faster access to information about their loved ones.”