

CETF Proves Telehealth Prevents Patient Transfers, Reduces Healthcare Costs, and Improves Quality of Care

The Challenge:

In a time when the need and demand for telehealth skyrocketed, hospitals and medical facilities were at their lowest ability to make the necessary digital transformation. Between staff burnout and workloads too burdened to make room for new technology, driving user adoption would be a legendary challenge.



The California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to bridge the digital divide, including the divide in American healthcare right now. It isn't a healthcare provider, but it addresses healthcare access in its work closing that digital gap.

When the COVID-19 crisis hit, every patient became someone who needed access to telehealth. Skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) were hit hard, and with an especially vulnerable patient population they became a top of priority for telehealth adoption. COVID procedures, staff burnout, and employee turnover were all obstacles to struggling SNFs that suddenly needed strong telehealth capabilities.

CETF started by partnering with five skilled nursing facilities in its pilot program. As luck would have it, obstacles persisted in getting these facilities online. Out of the five facilities in the pilot, only one of them implemented full telehealth abilities in the first phase of the mission, despite all odds: Los Angeles' Jewish Home for the Aging.

CETF's other four partnering hospitals languished through no fault of their own, buried under intense patient spikes, ever-shifting testing procedures during the pandemic, and high staff turnover. Trying to face all those challenges and still expecting your staff to have the time or energy to learn new technology? No matter what strategies were tried, implementation wasn't happening.

CETF's Goal for Telehealth:

Optimize the use of telehealth to augment and enhance health and medical care for all California residents — especially those who are medically underserved — to improve individual patient outcomes and overall population health.

The California Emerging Technology Fund doesn't have the luxury of being one big, interconnected hospital system with its partners. Managing multiple sites under one board of leadership is complex. With obstacles at every turn and their partnering physicians largely reporting workloads too burdened to make room for using new technology and equipment, it was time for a new strategy. If the CETF wanted its mission to succeed and see telehealth further develop in these communities, it needed to bring in some experts on telehealth technology, implementation, and training.





The Approach:

Tailored training for each partnering hospital site with boots-on-the-ground support.

As soon as the problem was identified, the leadership at CETF went to the board and said, “It’s not for lack of trying to train folks; it’s just all these challenges that hit at the same time.” CETF leaders felt confident they had done all they could to help prepare their physicians for using the equipment, but it wasn’t enough to surmount all the challenges they faced. That’s when CETF connected with AMD Global Telemedicine for help with the technical implementation and training support.

AMD’s knowledge and experience changed everything.

“As our facilities experienced frequent turnover, AMD’s support for this project was commendable! The AMD staff contributed numerous hours of training and re-training, addressed cybersecurity and connectivity issues, and problem-solved as needed.”

— Barb Yellowlees
Chair, CETF Telehealth
Committee



One of the first lessons that training with AMD taught CETF and its partnering hospitals was that each rollout for each facility would be unique. The specialists and physicians for each site needed different training and support from our training methods.

AMD went onsite and trained these physicians in person at their home facilities. If the facility encountered connectivity issues, AMD would troubleshoot the internet with them. When the facility needed continuous learning and practice on the equipment to be successful, AMD provided it.

Perhaps the biggest lesson learned was that each facility needed personalized, pre-planned, and continuous training support to make that digital leap. For CETF, making this pivot with AMD was a game-changer.



The Outcome:

CETF's project proved telehealth decreases patient transfers to hospitals, reducing costs and spread of COVID — and providers and patients are comfortable using telehealth when trained properly.



20% of patient transfers were prevented



Reduction in transportation-related healthcare costs and COVID transmission



94% of patients were comfortable with telehealth



Telehealth improved the quality of care in **88%** of visits

CETF moved from a pilot program to a full program and expanded to more partners. CETF and all its partner physicians learned a lot through the crisis, reevaluation, and training process.

First and foremost was the lesson that gaining buy-in from physicians and clients early is a top

priority. Hospital changes, especially large-scale changes, can be hard on staff — even harder on a staff that's already strained, as so many are right now. Gaining the trust that new tech and methods will improve their lives and their patients' lives is a must for moving forward with efficiency.



“Partnering with AMD was a game-changer. They brought in expert training and were there for us every step of the way.”

— Leticia Alejandrez
*Director of Telehealth and
Human Services, CETF*



Training programs require a lot of care. One-size-fits-all training does not work as well as personalized training to get people engaged; AMD’s client needed physician-tailored training and continuous support. Providing that support, including giving needed answers to users of our tech and equipment, means more access and greater usability in the long run.

Each of CETF’s succeeding facilities had one thing in common: a champion for telehealth technology at the highest level. These leaders in their field went out of their way to learn the tech and how to use it, and they shared that knowledge and enthusiasm with their peers. By believing in the mission, these doctors led the way for digital transformation in their home facilities.