



# Santa Teresa Children's Clinic: Transforming Rural Healthcare

Before 2020, Santa Teresa Children's Clinic strove to provide pediatric patients and their families in New Mexico with primary care. The Clinic's goal was to keep children healthy through preventive visits, the delivery of routine vaccinations, the diagnosis of conditions, and other applications.

When COVID-19 arose, the proactive, pro-child, and progressive organization became more focused on

providing high-quality, easily accessible telehealth medical care options to its populations, especially those living in rural communities. However, the Clinic needed a partner to make a difference in the lives of young people — and that's where a relationship with AMD Global Telemedicine and its reseller partner Solutionz proved to be a game-changer.



# The Challenge:

## Providing Rural Healthcare During a Pandemic

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In New Mexico, a significant number of people live far away from urban centers. According to government statistics, more than one-third of all New Mexicans [reside in rural communities](#). For children and their parents or guardians, getting to a clinic or emergency room can be an arduous process. Rural New Mexico residents frequently drive 40 minutes to an hour just to be seen by medical professionals. As such, many forgo routine appointments or fail to take care of their families' medical needs.

These problems of inaccessible healthcare were amplified in March 2020 with the sudden impact of the developing COVID-19 pandemic. Per research from McKinsey & Company, COVID-19 affected rural communities much differently than urban centers. Though the spread of the virus took time to reach remote American towns and neighborhoods, its effects were far [more serious for rural Americans](#).

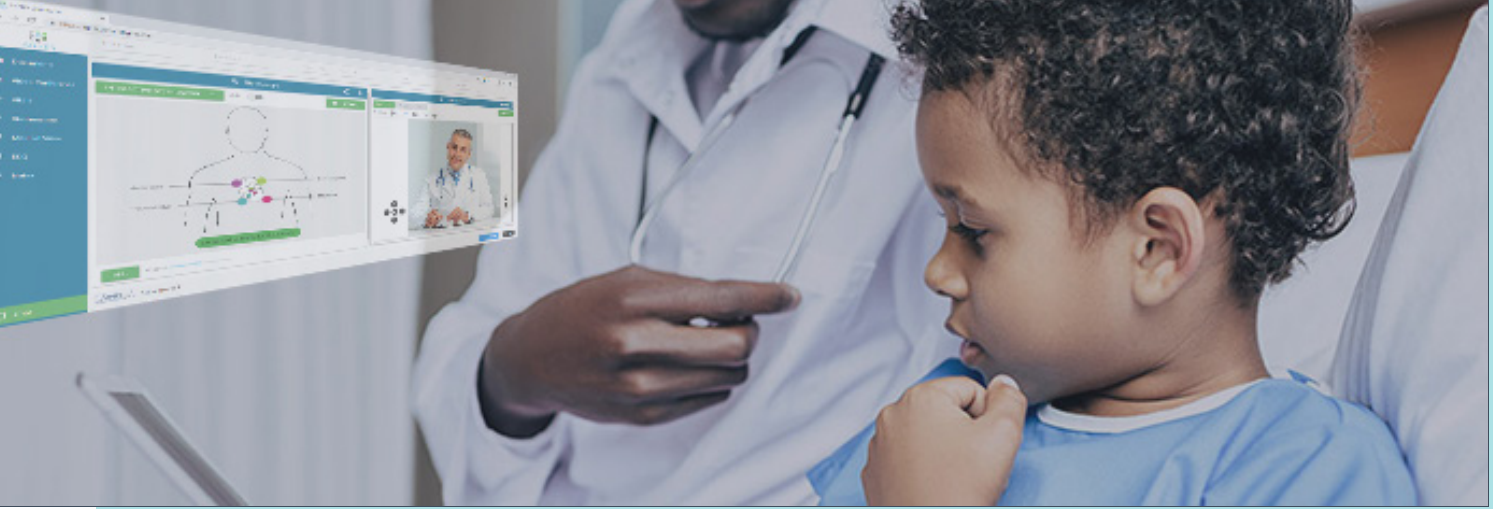
According to that same report, by 2021, the COVID-19 fatality rate in rural areas reached 175 deaths for every 100,000 residents — 24 more deaths than in urban areas. Those deaths weren't

equally distributed among one ethnic or racial population, either. Hospitalizations and deaths among minority individuals were higher than their white counterparts.

For the Santa Teresa Children's Clinic, those realities made it much harder to serve its young patients and employees. COVID-19 created obstacles to in-person training for staff members, slowing the implementation of innovative telemedicine solutions.

Though the Clinic pivoted rapidly to virtual training and correspondence, it was slowed down in its ability to showcase the integrity, professionalism, inclusivity, commitment, and performance excellence for which it was known. The organization needed the right mix of technology and tools to keep moving forward through COVID-19 and beyond.





# The Approach:

## Leaning Into the Best of Telemedicine

The answer to Santa Teresa Children's Clinic's biggest concerns was the integration of virtual care technology that could deliver the same clinical quality as an in-person visit. AMD's technology provided the Clinic with the ability to conduct primary care evaluations via telehealth. The evaluations were equivalent to in-person primary care visits but could occur anywhere. This opened doors for both the Clinic's staff as well as its young patients.

One of the most innovative ways that the Clinic made its telehealth available with the help of AMD was through strategic partnerships with school districts. To properly design, implement, and support the telemedicine solution, Santa Teresa Children's Clinic and AMD Global Telemedicine turned to sourcing partner Solutionz, which has a history of working with rural schools in the areas of telemedicine, classroom technology, and general audiovisual solutions. To determine the best fit for each customer site, Solutionz performed site surveys and customer meetings with Dr. Tanya V. Marin at Santa Teresa Children's Clinic and the staff at school sites. Solutionz then assigned a project manager and implementation team to build out the telemedicine systems for each school.

At certain schools, the Clinic was able to use AMD carts and patient assessment terminal (or PAT) wall units. Carts make it easier to automate the video visit process and allow for room-to-room virtual rounds. PAT wall units are FDA-listed, MDDS-compliant, standalone concepts complete with all video conferencing hardware and software. To enhance these solutions, the Clinic also invested in AMD's AGNES Connect software platform and its primary care medical devices, such as multipurpose cameras and scopes, stethoscopes, spirometers, etc.



# SOLUTIONZ

Now, when a child has an illness, Santa Teresa Children's Clinic can work with the school and the child's family to examine a patient beyond just a video visit, utilizing AMD's telehealth solutions for clinical-quality care. This greatly reduces the time frame between the onset of patient symptoms and diagnosis, as well as streamlines treatment and recovery.

Without carts and PAT units, the Clinic might have trouble quickly reaching patients with the appropriate care in rural communities. With these advancements, Clinic team members can provide the needed primary care services to a broader population. Although it generally concentrates on the needs of young people, the Clinic is equipped to deliver world-class telemedicine to adults in schools as well.

To help rural New Mexico residents and families understand how reliable and accurate telehealth can be, the Clinic explains the process in-depth on its website. It describes telemedicine as a modern type of "house call," where a physician, nurse, or other provider can essentially remotely evaluate patients. Fortunately, placing this telemedicine solution in local schools has greatly assisted in lowering barriers to accessible healthcare in rural communities.







# The Outcome:

## Improved Interest and Use of Telemedicine

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The changes Santa Teresa Children's Clinic made have paid off over the past few years. One of the most noticeable benefits the Clinic has experienced is how AMD's equipment and technologies have allowed the Clinic staff to comprehensively treat pediatric patients.

For example, consider the Clinic's use of spirometry. One of the biggest problems facing children in all areas, including rural communities, is asthma. Spirometry allows providers to work with children with asthma and prevent them from getting sicker. With telehealth-based spirometry devices from AMD, patients of the Clinic can test and monitor their level of asthmatic responses. The result is that patients and their families can more successfully reduce the intensity of asthma symptoms even if they can't be in person with a provider.

Having telehealth choices and school-based AMD telemedicine solutions enables the Clinic to create personalized treatment plans, too. Having the added extension of these telemedicine devices and virtual care technology available where a child goes to school regularly allows the Clinic to see patients more often. When children are seen routinely, their treatment plans can be noted and changed to keep up with their health. An added benefit is that parents don't have to lose as much

time out of work to take their children to medical appointments. They can travel a much shorter distance to the nearest school with an AMD telemedicine system.

A huge upside to the Clinic's forward-leaning approaches to telehealth has been the response from patients and their families, even post-coronavirus. Parents (and children) can sometimes still be reluctant to use telemedicine because they're not sure it's right for them. However, once they receive telehealth services — and find out how customized, discreet, stress-free, and accurate they are — they are more apt to refer their family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, and others to the Clinic. The Clinic has seen a significant increase in patients who've set up telehealth appointments because of referrals.

Ultimately, the Clinic hopes to deploy more AMD telehealth systems into schools throughout New Mexico and perhaps beyond the state's borders in the coming years. The recruitment efforts to make this happen are already set in motion. Since the infrastructure and precedent have been set, expansion won't be difficult. The more schools that come aboard, the more services to rural pediatric patients that the Clinic's team can provide.



## The Hero: Dr. Tanya V. Marin

The continued success of the Santa Teresa Children's Clinic comes from Dr. Marin, a dedicated certified pediatric nurse practitioner. Dr. Marin has spent more than two decades working with pediatric patients and believes in the power of investing in the latest technologies.

Dr. Marin strongly believes the services the Clinic provides are not just for the child but to benefit the community as a whole. "The truth is," Dr. Marin explains, "when you help one person, you help the whole community. So it really does take a village."

This community-centric philosophy brings superior healthcare in all forms to children regardless of where they live. Accordingly,

Dr. Marin has been at the forefront of championing solutions like telemedicine to make quality and timely medical services available to everyone.

Thanks to Dr. Marin's vision and foresight, New Mexico's youngest residents can lead healthier lives.

