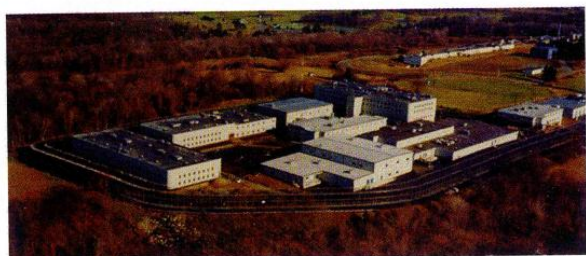


Case Study

Private Healthcare Company Organizes County Corrections Medical Records



The Essex County Correctional Facility, located about 20 miles north of Boston.

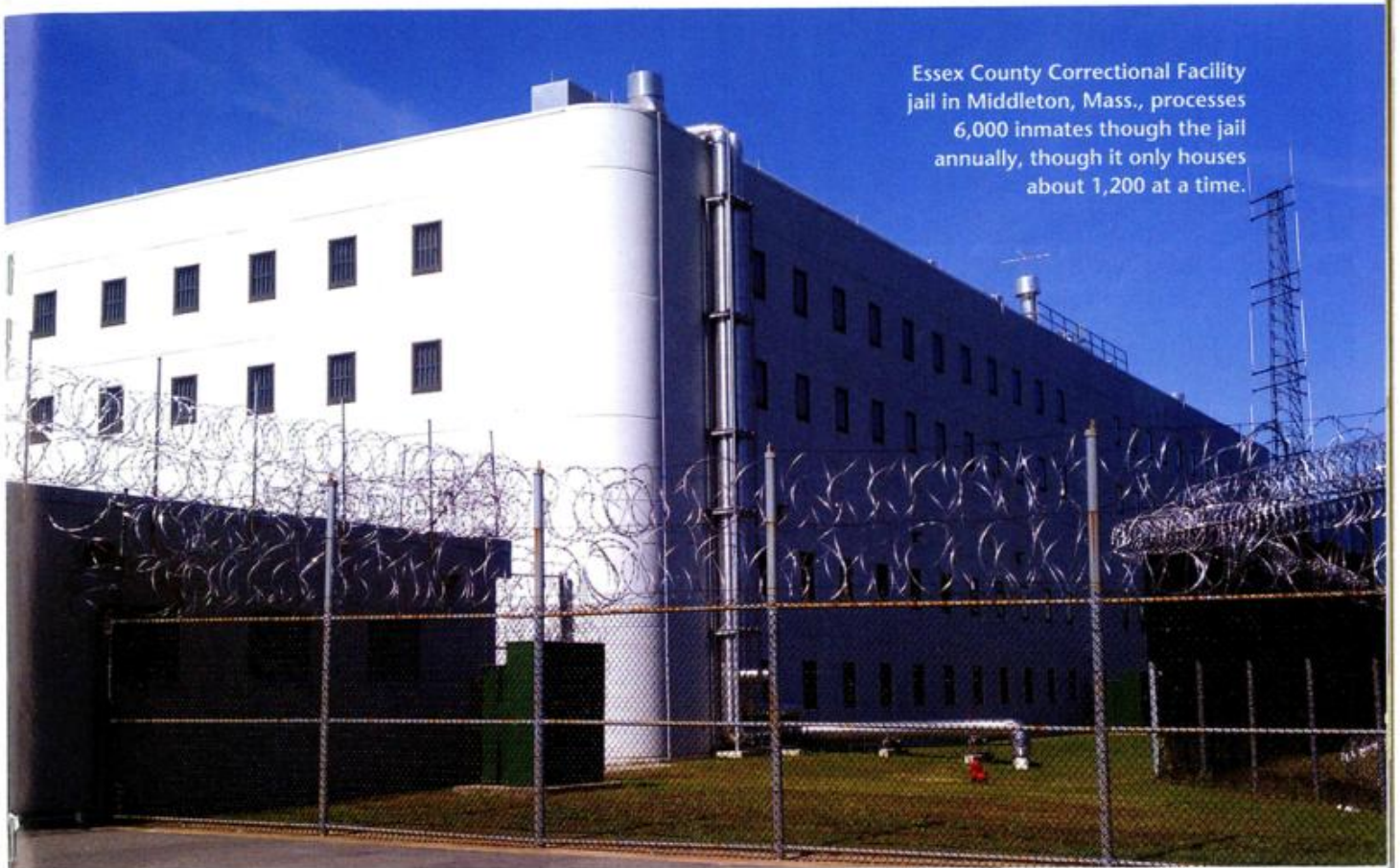
Esex County Correctional Facility jail in Middleton, Mass., was built over 20 years ago and has been privatized for the last 12 years. The jail houses over 1,200 inmates at any given time, and on the same property is a 24-bed women's jail, as well as a work release center. A total of 6,000 inmates are processed through the jail annually, and regardless of if they stay for three days or many years, as soon as the inmate becomes a resident of the facility, that inmate's medical records are the responsibility of

Essex County Corrections. That's a lot of medical records to keep track of, and since its healthcare contract has a large budget proportionally and contains numerous particulars, James Lander, assistant superintendent, pays a great deal of attention to the issue of healthcare.

For the last three years, Essex County has enlisted the help of Naphcare to oversee the facility's medical care and records. Initially when Lander wrote the request for proposal to find a new vendor, he required that the company be set up and ready to go

within 90 days. Not an easy feat—the new vendor had to set up contacts with area hospitals and other support services as well as make sure all the wiring was set up—and Naphcare was ready 30 days ahead of schedule.

With Naphcare's professionalism and efficiency, Lander knew he had chosen the right vendor to oversee the healthcare for Essex County. On top of all of that, Naphcare was going to put to use the medical rooms that were already prebuilt into the facility 20 years earlier when the jail was built. It was time to wipe



Essex County Correctional Facility jail in Middleton, Mass., processes 6,000 inmates though the jail annually, though it only houses about 1,200 at a time.

the dust that had collected in those rooms and start taking care of inmates onsite.

Ambulance Runs: Bleeding the Facility Dry

Even though the facility has its own x-ray machine, triage center and dental area, “the previous vendor wasn’t utilizing those areas the way we wanted them to,” Lander says. Lander was finding that inmates were being sent out to the hospital in an ambulance for something as small as minor stitches. The nearest hospital is 10 miles away from the jail, and each time an ambulance was called, it would cost them \$700. In addition, they’d have to pay for two officers to transport the inmate, two more officers to fill the holes the transport officers create—the cost adds up fast.

It was frustrating, Lander

notes, because a lot of the services could have been done onsite. In addition, since the facility is accredited, it has to follow certain rules, and one of those rules is that an ambulance has to be in and out of the facility within 11 minutes.

Now that Essex County uses Naphcare, a provider of onsite medical personnel and services, it can not only put the facility rooms to good use, but it can save money as well.

Naphcare staff can handle both minor traumas and day-to-day healthcare. Essex County has negative pressure air rooms (that keep the contaminants in) so that if people with contagious diseases like tuberculosis or hepatitis need to be in sterile areas, those rooms are set up specifically for that, Lander says. All basic dental and eye care is handled onsite as well as the ability to set minor broken bones, like a finger, as well as sutures, blood work and mental

health issues. Unless it’s a severe emergency, such as an inmate has major internal injuries, Naphcare is equipped to handle it within the facility’s walls.

Before, There Was Paper... Lots and Lots of Paper

Before Lander brought in Naphcare, all the medical records and everything were kept on paper. “Originally, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts passed laws that said inmate records had to be kept safe for seven years before they could be destroyed. Then they changed certain rules. And now, we have to keep medical records onsite for the inmate’s lifetime,” Lander says.

With the current vendor, the medical records reverted back to Essex County once they left, and

they had to find storage space for all the paper documents, which had to be paid for by the square footage. That's a lot of paper; that's a lot of storage space; that's a lot of money.

"Anyone who comes in here becomes our prisoner regardless of how long they're with us," Lander says. Some inmates, called safe keeps, are only there for three days. But that doesn't matter. The medical records of that safe keep have to be kept for the lifetime of the inmate.

Filling the Gaps

But the process was about to become enormously more efficient. When Naphcare took over, they brought their software Techcare, which is basically a paperless system that monitors all medical records, pharmacy records, and does inmate tracking from the day they come in until the day they're released. The records follow the inmates through this electronic system.

For example, if an inmate goes to the hospital, they wear a bar-coded bracelet that contains all of their medical records on it; so the hospital will know what's going on with the inmate before they treat him. The hospital, in turn, can input information in Techcare, so that when the inmate returns to the jail, there is no interruption in their medical records. This is helpful for staff in many ways. Imagine if an inmate is allergic to bee stings and gets stung; it's in his medical record that the allergy is there and the epi-pen is kept onsite for just such an occasional.

And since recidivism is a way of life for both inmates and facilities, when an inmate returns after two or three years, that inmate is already in the system with an extensive medical history already on file. Sure, staff has to fill in the gaps for the last few years, but with Techcare, they have a springboard from which to bounce. "That impressed us," Lander says.

Reports: the Wave Of the Future

"Another thing about Techcare was that it would interface with our jail management system, which is our very-involved booking system," Lander says. The jail management system is an extensive intake of each inmate, and upon entry, all of the information is entered into Techcare. "We do mug shots, a personal history of the inmate, [which is] similar to what police do before the inmate gets here but ours is more up-to-date, and many police departments interface with us because of this. Without breaking any of the HIPPA laws, officers can find out information about the inmate, like if he or she is prone to violent outbursts, which is just another thing to help the officers out along the way," he says.

In Lander's initial bid three years ago, he stated he wanted a company to deliver a monthly snapshot on how things were



going on the medical side of things. This would give an account, for example, how many inmates went to the emergency room—how many went by cruiser vs. how many by ambulance—who went for what, for example how many went for HIV, broken bones, psychotropic drugs, a whole list of things that the facility had never had access to before. And of course, no names are revealed so no privacy rules are broken.

Accountability

“With Techcare reports, we stay organized and accountable,” Lander says, “and if we have problems with the ambulance getting through the sally port, for example, we can follow up on our own based on the info gathered from the reports.”

Techcare can give Essex County reports for any data they need, like ambulance runs, communicable diseases, how many

times nurses respond to the blocks, when diabetics go to infirmary, mental health issues, trauma issues; it can even track inmates who say they’re not getting their meds. It documents date, time, and duration of doctor visits to inmates. “If we ever go to court for something and the inmate claims they were in the facility for months and the doc never came to see him, it’s all documented that the doc was in fact there,” Lander says. “And as an additional backup, we have everything documented by camera, and we can enter the time in question on the camera and match it up to the report to show that the nurse was there on the block. It doesn’t happen a lot, but it’s there just in case.”

Techcare also tracks medication, which is the biggest expense next to the infirmary. According to Lander, 62% of the inmates are on some kind of medication. And with their previous vendor, if an

inmate began taking medication from a 30-day blister pack, where an inmate punches the pill through foil, and was released the next day, Essex County would have to discard 29 perfectly good pills. “With Naphcare, we’re allowed to work with them; if we use one or two pills, they’d buy back the rest of the pills and send them back to their main pharmacy. With accreditation, there are very stringent rules when it comes down to medication. Naphcare can give us reports on how many pills go out in a day, a week, who’s on them and why, just with a click of the mouse,” Lander says.

And the best thing about this is that all of this information is stored electronically and is backed up daily, so there’s no danger of losing it. ☺

For more information, please visit:
www.naphcare.com
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