

# Parkland Health & Hospital

Monitoring the Pulse of the Call Center

## A Low Maintenance, High Performance Solution

Administering Exceptional Healthcare Parkland Health & Hospital System has provided community healthcare services to the residents of Dallas County, Texas since 1894. It was recently named as one of America's best hospitals by U.S. News & World Report for the 14th consecutive year.

Parkland is part of the Dallas County Hospital District and the primary teaching hospital for the UT Southwestern Medical School. It is nationally recognized for its specialty medicine areas, including epilepsy treatment, arrhythmia management, and diagnostic cardiology. The trauma and burn centers are also internationally renowned. The Regional Burn Center at Parkland, established in 1962, has treated more burn patients than any other civilian burn center in the world. Parkland Health & Hospital System has 7000+ employees, 983 beds, and is located on a large campus near downtown Dallas with connections to multiple outlying health centers and school-based clinics. The facility prides itself on providing its customers with the highest level of care, right down to how it handles incoming phone calls.

## Accessing Over a Million Calls per Year

Parkland explored the potential for development of an organized call center for some time before enlisting the consulting services of Sheila Cook-Dolciame, a registered nurse, call center veteran and expert in the field of telephone triage. It included upgrading Parkland's telecommunications equipment and IT systems to meet the needs of a call center environment.

"A good call recording system was a must," recalls Cook-Dolciame. "Parkland required a solution that would allow a high volume of calls to be recorded. More importantly, the call recording system had to allow quick call retrieval regardless of the agent's station location," she added. After a thorough evaluation and needs assessment, the process of purchasing such a system was initiated. A key factor in Parkland's decision to choose HigherGround's Praetorian™ was the software's ability to meet the requirement of accessing call recordings quickly by using a variety of factors and fields such as the agent's name, station extension, date and time of call, and the caller's phone number. "We knew it was what Parkland needed," said Cook-Dolciame.

Cook-Dolciame was brought on board as director of Parkland's Call Center Operations Department in 1998. After three years of operating a successful nurse advice line, the Department assumed the additional responsibility for the PBX hospital operator functions in 2001. "It brought on a plethora of new issues. The biggest challenge was taking on a large volume of calls with the same number of agents and an already tight budget, without increasing caller wait times," says Cook-Dolciame. A unique approach was put into action. The non-clinical agents were cross-trained to take operator calls as well as to front the nurse advice line calls. The role of the nurses was expanded to provide back-up call coverage for the operators. The call center staff currently handles more than 3000 calls per day - with more than 500 of those coming in on the nurse advice lines.

The innovative call center model has proven successful. The call abandonment rate is consistently less than 10% with an average answer speed of less than 18 seconds for nonemergency calls. "We are heavily dependent on the capabilities provided by the HigherGround solution to accomplish this. It has allowed us to maximize our cross-training efforts as well as to provide prompt agent feedback and coaching to ensure a high level of service to our customers," reports Cook-Dolciame. Callers are given direct access to knowledgeable professionals who can provide valuable information or are quickly referred to the appropriate resources within the Parkland Health & Hospital System.

## Improving Customer Service

Parkland's Call Center Operations Department conducts a comprehensive Quality Improvement Program. All calls are recorded and saved for later access. The historical review of these calls provides agents with valuable training for best practices on situations that require immediate and accurate responses. Parkland upgraded its system with HigherGround's Mentor™ to further expand its capabilities. The upgrade allowed for more detailed feedback to agents. "The screen capture feature is wonderful. It has added eyes to our ears. We can now see what agents are doing on their computer screens at any point in a call," said Cook-Dolciame. "It's almost like sitting next to the agent when a historical quality audit is done."

In addition to improving agent performance, the ability to view an agent's navigation through fields and screens has also led to improvements in the triage software application they use. It resulted in improved ease-of-use and efficiency. "As the first point of contact with Parkland Health & Hospital System for many customers, we are extremely proud of the high level of customer service we provide to our community. When the initial interaction is a positive experience, it leaves a very good and lasting impression among the population we serve," stated Cook-Dolciame.