Providing Access Control for an Assisted Living Facility

A White Paper written by



Paxton Access US 7061 Grand National Drive, Suite 139 Orlando FL 32819 USA

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Introduction

Without a doubt, deploying an access control system in an assisted living facility is important on a number of different levels – including emotional, physical, and financial. On an emotional plane, it is vital that the senior residents should inherently feel safe in an assisted living facility. On a physical level, it is important that the residents, visitors and staff feel protected by allowing only authorized individuals access to the premises. Lastly, when the financial aspect is considered, a system should be in place to: (1) solve the immediate security related issues and (2) scale accordingly as the facility grows in size and risk.

The Problem

Finding the most effective way to enhance the existing security program through the use of an electronic access control system and mitigate risk.

The Location

Located in Neenah, Wisconsin, Valley VNA Senior Services is a state-of-the-art healthcare provider for an assisted living community.

The facility's primary mission is to provide an optimal level of care for senior adults located either (1) onsite in independent, semi-independent apartments and assisted living floors or (2) in a patient's home through the use of In-Home Care Services. In addition, Valley VNA provides a host of quality wellness services year-round for the benefit of the entire local community.

Comprised of multiple buildings, Valley VNA is home to as many as 100 residents at any given time. This health care provider also maintains a staff of highly qualified medical personnel as well as an extensive amount of useful, but very expensive medical equipment within the facility.

The Challenge

Without a doubt, Valley VNA had a definite problem. After all, this health care provider was responsible for the safety of well over 100 residents - and also had an extensive array of medical and office equipment on site to look after. However, because of the multiple buildings on-site, Valley VNA understandably had a difficult time tracking patient, staff and guest building access.

In addition, as ringing a bell was the only way to gain entry into the facility after hours, residents were often left on their own while the staff opened the doors for visitors and incoming staff members. As one may guess, this situation was a potentially dangerous one for the less able residents, and posed a significant health liability risk as well.

The Assessment

Cathy Loomans, the IT Director for Valley VNA, was introduced to Lappen Security representative, Scott Wildenberg, via a mutual colleague. Based in Little Chute, Wisconsin, Lappen Security was well regarded based on the company's proven track record of timely quality service, excellent products, and detailed workmanship.

Loomans then asked Wildenberg to examine Valley VNA's existing security risks within the existing setup; at this time, she also requested a system that could best maximize the security and safety for both the facility's current and future needs.

Her primary concern, of course, was the safety and well-being of the Valley VNA residents. However, Loomans also knew that an efficient access control system would offer additional benefits as well.

Through detailed interviews with various staff members, Wildenberg was able to identify several key risk factors that included:

- The inability to track keys issued to residents, families and employees
- The potential loss of costly office and medical equipment
- The need to protect confidential personal information.
- The lack of access control protocols to allow for authorized access after-hours.

The Solution

Wildenberg immediately realized that the facility needed to move to a modern access control system. He additionally understood that this system must also be robust enough to handle multiple buildings, nearly constant use, and different access control settings for staff, residents and visitors alike. However, he also understood that this system needed to be intuitive – so that the average staff member could use and understand the system on a regular basis.

That said, in order to properly secure the facility, Wildenberg concluded that the security company needed to wire fifteen doors within the buildings and accommodate 500 cardholders.

The Implementation

After reviewing the requirements of Valley VNA, Lappen Security recommended implementing the Paxton Access Net2 access control solution with Net2 plus control units and P50 proximity readers. This choice was an obvious one since the Paxton Access Net2 included a full set of access control features, license-free software, multiple workstations, report capabilities and an easy card management system.

Additionally, Lappen Security knew that the Net2 software could run reports relevant to the Center's operation. For example, the software could readily find:

- the last access location of any individual in the entire facility
- locations where people may have attempted to gain access to
- exactly where people have been granted access to throughout the facility.

Further, the Net2 could also remove a card user from access privileges within seconds - allowing for greater control and increased safety of both the residents and staff alike. For example, if a guest should only be on site for a set period of time, his or her access privileges could readily be taken away if he or she decides to abuse these privileges. In addition, if a resident suffering from dementia wandered from a designated area, the access privileges of this resident could be changed almost instantly - for his or her own personal safety.

Finally, the Net2 also boasts of an emergency lockdown feature that, as the name suggests, will instantly lock the doors of the entire facility during an emergency situation. Not only will this feature keep the residents of the facility safely contained, no unauthorized individuals would be able to access the buildings as well.

Chad Bevers, the Project Manager for Lappen Security who oversaw the installation of Paxton's Net2 system on the Vmware/Windows Server 2003 operating system, agrees that this system is a powerful one.

In a statement, Bevers had the following good things to say about the system:

"Installing the Net2 software and Net2 plus IP controllers makes my job very easy. There are many advantages of working with Paxton products, which is why Lappen Security uses them on small and large facilities, we work in various vertical markets including commercial, manufacturing, healthcare, transportation and petrochemical.

"The other great advantage is that we do not need to worry about license fees or manufacturing support costs since Paxton provides them all for free and include a five year warranty"

The Response

As one may expect, the response from Valley VNA has been an extremely positive one for both Paxton and Lappen Security.

Cathy Loomans, the IT Director for Valley VNA, made the following positive statement regarding the solution:

- (1) "The simple method of configuring time schedules and door privileges makes it quick and easy to maximize who we allow access to, where they can go and when, providing a level of security that we've never had and it was so easy. We are a 24/7/365 community. Our staff members now feel the benefit of the added security during night shifts as they know the building is locked down automatically. Nobody can enter unless they have the correct security clearance. We no longer have to worry about missing keys or keys that are not returned and tracking who may have them."
- (2)"Another advantage of the Net2 system is the ability to quickly change the programming for all doors. It has allowed us to easily accommodate meetings held within this building so those doors unlock allowing access as people arrive and then automatically locking when the meetings are underway."

(3) She concluded by revealing how the new system has positively impacted residents and visitors:

"The biggest surprise to the Valley VNA security team was how appreciative residents, family members and frequent service providers were that the community was now secure and how easy it was to move through our site with just an access card.

For More Information

For more information on Paxton Access, Inc, please visit our site at www.paxton-access.com or by calling (877) 438-7298

For more information on Lappen Security, please contact them at www.lappensecurity.com or by calling (920) 734-3027

In addition, Valley VNA Senior Services can be contacted by visiting www.valleyvna.org