

Better mental health through better connectivity

- **Business needs** - A better way to support client telehealth sessions and staff work across seven counties
- **Networking solution** - AT&T Dedicated Internet makes it easier for clients to access treatment and for staff to fulfill their duties.
- **Business value** - The ability to connect with clients and support staff collaboration
- **Industry focus** - Mental health treatment
- **Size** - 1 million clients since its founding

About Child & Family Guidance Center

Child & Family Guidance Center (CFGC) takes an ultramodern approach to treating individuals throughout seven north Texas counties who have complex mental and behavioral health challenges. From diagnosis to therapy and medication management, CFGC's doctors and counselors help improve the lives of tens of thousands of north Texans each year as they recover from trauma and address their mental health needs. The comprehensive services provided through all nine Child & Family Guidance Centers and their virtual component empower clients to improve their quality of life and thrive in their communities. The organization never turns away anyone because of an inability to pay.

The situation

To ensure the quality care that has been its hallmark, CFGC needed a way for its nine locations in north Texas to facilitate telehealth services and internal communications to make it easier for clients to get help. Internet services were particularly challenging in rural locations. CFGC required secure, reliable connectivity to serve clients and staff.

Solution

AT&T Dedicated Internet delivers dependable connectivity that Child & Family Guidance Center (CFGC) needs. AT&T Business offers the fastest speeds from 500Gbps up to 1Tbps with built-in proactive monitoring to support highly reliable service. The center and its clients benefit from nationwide availability and 100% uptime guaranteed (or we'll credit your account).

More than a century of service

The history of nonprofit work in north Texas is literally the history of CFGC, which opened its doors to families more than a century ago. CFGC was the first child guidance center in Texas and second in the nation and has evolved ever since to meet the needs of the community.



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Tressie Johnsen, CFGC Marketing Director, said it began its important work after a crisis—one of the worst, snowiest winters in history. “We’ve been here to support the community since 1896, a time when mental health was not even talked about,” she said. “We have a rich history of service, especially in Dallas and the north Texas community.” CFGC has worked with more than 1 million clients since its founding.

Today, the center operates nine north Texas clinics and provides online telehealth appointments and homebased services. “We do everything from basic psychosocial assessments and psychiatric evaluations to medication management screenings, counseling and therapy, and rehabilitation,” Johnsen said. Services range from counseling a child after a traumatic experience to intensive outpatient care to help people transition from a hospital environment to living in the community. Its culturally responsive, trauma-informed healthcare is offered regardless of individuals’ ability to pay.

Keeping families intact

CFGC has a staff of 250. It includes psychiatrists, psychologists, nurse practitioners, licensed counselors, and mental health providers. The center also has around 80 contractors who provide specialized services. “If a client could benefit from equine therapy, art therapy, or another modality, we’re going to make sure they have access to those resources,” Johnsen said.

Staff and contractors work to wrap services around clients to treat them in a comprehensive, holistic way. The organization’s wraparound facilitator coordinates the services from staff and contractors with a community-based support team. “If the client is a child, this team might include the school counselor, religious leader,

neighbors, friends, or anyone who is willing to support that family,” she said. “We put together a roundtable team that comes together to give the patient and family the support they need.”

The team provides individualized help for families with issues. “The overarching goal for this portion of our program is for us to keep families intact, and to keep children and their families in a healthy place. We try to provide whatever tools children need to be healthy and grow into productive members of society. We want to help them get beyond surviving to thriving,” Johnsen said.

Innovating to help clients

CFGC is always devising new ways to help clients. It recently added pharmacies to three of its locations. “The pharmacies are important for accessibility—our clients are able to leave their appointments and get their medication right away, in the same building,” Johnsen said.

The onsite pharmacies also make it easier for doctors and pharmacists to communicate. “This enables them to make quick, real-time adjustments when necessary, so clients don’t have to wait and go through the system again to make a change.”

CFGC pharmacies also make free home delivery of medications. “This service allows us to ensure our clients have their medication as quickly as possible,

which can be a matter of life and death for a lot of these clients,” she said. “It’s very, very important.”

Real-time access to doctors

Always on the leading edge, CFGC has long relied on technology to increase staff effectiveness and efficiency. Even before telehealth appointments became widely accepted, staff used computers for research and record keeping.

“Everybody uses technology constantly, especially the internet. Information is incredibly important, and privacy and security are crucial for us,” Johnsen said. “Whether clients come into the clinic or are seen via telehealth, staff will be utilizing technology during that process.”

One of the organization’s biggest challenges is communication between clinics. “We have nine locations that are spread out all across north Texas; it would take a full day to drive to all of them,” she said. Telehealth visits make it easier for clients to access care and enable staff to be more productive.

“If one of our doctors is at Greenville today, but one of his clients two hours away in Waxahachie needs to be seen, we can set them up to talk to each other in a telehealth visit. Our preference is that they’re in the same place, but that’s not always realistic for our clients,” she said. “Technology enables us to remove

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that barrier of distance and give them real-time access to their provider.”

“If the internet goes down, we are unable to see clients, period,” Johnsen said. However, CFGC’s former internet service was undependable. “The provider was not providing a service level agreement-backed product,” she said. “If their service went down, we could be out for days, and that’s a dangerous thing in our industry, with clients who rely on our providers to stay healthy and functional. We started looking for other internet providers.”

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Reliability and security

After a diligent search, CFGC selected AT&T Dedicated Internet to support its telehealth sessions and other center applications. “We chose it for the reliability of its network and its service level agreements,” Johnsen said.

Security was another vital consideration. “We have an ethical and legal duty to protect all our information, whether it be our clients’ names and their medical records or other information. When our providers are talking to each other or sending prescriptions, they need to be really careful about how that information can be accessed.”

The federal government requires that healthcare providers keep medical charts in a digital format. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) mandates that healthcare providers protect patient data with appropriate administrative, physical, and technical safeguards to ensure the confidentiality, integrity, and security of this information.

If a healthcare provider’s network were to be breached, it could incur fines from the government. “And it could also be dangerous for our clients, so security is of the utmost importance. And AT&T is a huge part of that,” she said.

Confidence in the network

AT&T Dedicated Internet is provided through advanced fiber-optic networks. The service offers guaranteed bandwidth at the advertised speeds, symmetrical upload and download speeds, and better throughput across the network.

“The technology team also liked their reputation and the size and security of the AT&T network. Some of the other providers couldn’t give us the confidence that we needed,” Johnsen said. “Now with AT&T we can move forward. We can’t afford to risk the information of our clients or the 125,000 encounters our staff have every day.”

The IT professionals appreciate the AT&T Business service level agreements, especially about internet connectivity. “That’s kind of the foundation for all our other technology, so it was important for us to work with AT&T, a big name that we can rely on.”

CFGC staff consider confidence the biggest benefit of its AT&T Business service. “It’s crucial for us to have



internet access because that's what makes all the other pieces work—doctors need our phone system, email, and messaging,” she said. “Thankfully, it's been fantastic.”

Consistency for clients

Johnsen said she has not heard of any difficulty with AT&T Dedicated Internet. “If there's ever been an issue, it seems to have been resolved without much drama, which is a very different experience from what we've had from other providers. The AT&T reliability has been fantastic.”

“We're able to move forward in our operations, knowing that we are backed by a dedicated fiber internet that allows us to support telehealth and other services,” she said. “We can provide our clients with consistency because AT&T provides us with consistent service. I think that's very important.”

AT&T Dedicated Internet makes it a lot easier for CFGC staff to communicate information quickly. “This is

especially important in matters that are time sensitive, like medical issues and prescriptions,” she said. “It would probably affect the clients that we serve dramatically if we weren't able to rely on technology every single day.”

CFGC currently connects seven of its nine clinics with AT&T Business Fiber. “We are ready to move forward with the other clinics,” she said. “We plan to expand our services to best meet the needs of our clients.” This includes increasing services to help more clients and opening pharmacies at other locations. “Being able to bring our full suite of services to all the clinics and all the clients that we serve is our dream. Our goal is to provide that true integrated care approach to serve each client the best we can.”

Johnsen believes AT&T Business will be able to assist the organization as CFGC expands. “That's the hope and plan,” she said.