

# Johnson City Medical Center: *Dedication to Long-Term Partnership*

**Johnson City Medical Center (JCMC)**, located in Johnson City, Tennessee, is one of 15 hospitals that comprise the Mountain States Health Alliance healthcare system. With 488 beds, JCMC is the health alliance's flagship hospital, and is a level-one trauma center, a leading cancer center, an acute-care teaching hospital, and has been named as one of the top 100 heart hospitals by Solucient.



Prior to contracting with HHS for EVS services in December 2006, that department was operated in-house by JCMC. "We had traditionally self-operated our EVS department for years, but decided to put it out for bid to see how costs would compare," says Tom Tull, assistant vice president of Washington County Operations for Mountain States Health Alliance.

*"Multiple companies responded to our RFP, but the proposal from HHS made the most sense to us," Tull explains. "We were impressed with their focus on training, and commitment to having sufficient management personnel on site."*

Three years after bringing HHS on board to handle EVS, the medical center asked HHS to manage patient transportation services by overseeing JCMC team members providing that service.

Sheldon Cash is the on-site director of EVS at JCMC. "It's a huge facility, with about 1.2 million total square feet," Cash explains. "The facility also is unique because it offers around-the-clock visitation. That means there's a continual public presence in the hospital 24 hours a

day and extremely limited periods of time when the facility gears down. It creates an extra cleaning challenge—but we're up for the challenge."

Mr. Tull concurs. "HHS has a very systematic approach that is extremely impressive," he says. "When we hired HHS, we transitioned our housekeeping staff from our employment to theirs, and those team members, along with others hired by HHS, received extensive training. They always have a good number of supervisors who are out on the floors working and assisting the staff."

*"This approach inspires great teamwork and the result has been a much lower staff turnover rate in this department than we had experienced previously," Tull says. "Longevity among EVS team members really contributes to other success factors in a hospital."*

"For example," Tull continues, "nurses work quite a bit with housekeeping issues; so low EVS turnover allows nurses and EVS staff to develop trust and work as a cohesive team. Both our patients and our nurses are much more satisfied."

## The lowdown on low turnover

It is widely understood that high turnover is typical among front line staff in janitorial jobs. That fact may be accepted by many organizations...but HHS isn't one of them. "HHS has a reputation for its expertise in managing front line, non-clinical team members," Sheldon says, "and onsite managers receive extensive training in keeping team members engaged with their jobs. For example, I believe in a transparent decision-making process, and I'm more than happy to explain my decisions as much as possible."

### Partnership Highlights

- ◆ HHS replaced an In-House EVS program in November of 2007, and began managing Patient Transport at the end of 2009
- ◆ Room turn time has decreased by nearly half an hour to date, from 125 minutes to 57 minutes

“I value the opportunity to listen to my team members,” Cash says, “especially when they don’t understand a decision I have made. It allows them the opportunity to hear my logic behind the decision, and it also allows me the opportunity to actively listen to their ideas and use their great suggestions to further improve our overall patient care environment.”

*“We look at our staff as an extended family,” Cash explains, “and do all we can to demonstrate that we care about them.”*

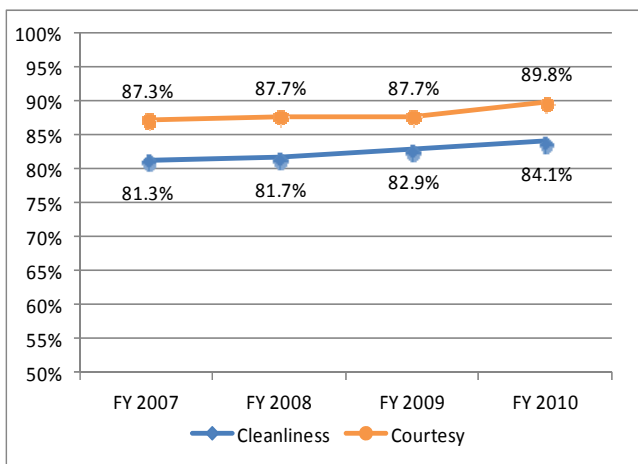
“I feel privileged and honored to work with a passionate team of managers and front line team members—their commitment to bring loving care to healthcare is extraordinary.”

### Patient satisfaction means doing whatever it takes

The HHS approach to patient satisfaction means cleaning, cleaning, and cleaning again. “We provide morning, afternoon, and evening cleaning to each patient room,” Cash says.

*“We understand that we must impact not only the quality of the cleaning service, but also the perception that patients and visitors have of how clean the room and the overall hospital is.”*

“If we deliver a service in a room and the patient isn’t there, we follow up so they realize we were in the room providing a service. Our managers also talk with patients and families to find out if they are satisfied with housekeeping. All of this means that HHS ‘touches’ the patient several times a day.”



Average annual PSMS scores during JCMC-HHS partnership.

“HHS uses excellent floor care techniques and are careful to always have sufficient staff working so that multiple daily visits can be made to each room,” Tull explains.

“They also ensure common areas are policed and maintained at all times. Perhaps most importantly, patients and visitors like to see shiny floors,” Tull continues, “There is a perception that shiny floors mean the hospital is clean and safe.”

*“People have become more fearful of contracting infections within a hospital,” Tull explains, “so it’s more important than ever to go the extra mile to keep our facility spotless and gleaming. HHS really does that for us, and more.”*

### A look at the bottom line

“The cost of outsourcing our EVS to HHS has turned out to be slightly higher than when we were doing it on our own. But that’s not a bad thing at all—because what we’ve discovered is that we were completely underfunded when we did it on our own,” Tull says.

*“With HHS on our team, we see now that we had been significantly understaffed and lacked many critical resources in this area.” Tull continues, “The hospital is so much cleaner now and everything runs very smoothly.”*

“HHS just does an outstanding job in every way, so the additional cost is absolutely worth it. They are also very cost-conscious and never add resources or services that we haven’t requested.”

Cash notes that the JCMC EVS team has increased efficiencies in several areas that provide the medical center with a potential for increased revenue. For example, he says that since HHS has partnered with MSHA onsite at JCMC, patient throughput time has decreased dramatically.

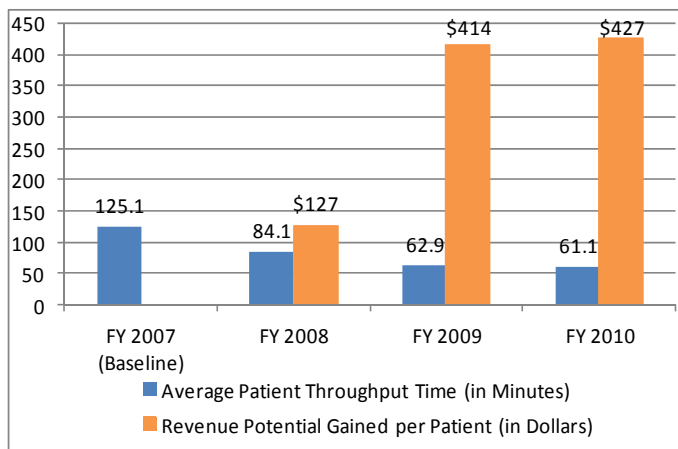
*“We have reduced overall throughput by more than 50 percent from the time from when a patient is discharged to when the room is ready for the next patient—from 125 minutes down to an average of 57 minutes,” Cash explains.*

“Faster throughput allows more patients to be admitted and treated; more efficient use of CT/MRI equipment,

cath lab and other services; scheduling of more surgeries; fewer ER diversions and walk-outs; and more available beds,” he says.

“JCMC has nearly 4,000 patient room turnovers each month, and for every 15 minutes we can save during the process, there’s a potential for \$100 in additional revenue, if MSHA can fill the bed,” Cash explains.

*“That means our partnership provides JCMC with an opportunity to generate \$1.79 million a month in extra revenue, or \$21.5 million annually.”*



*Revenue potential gained by improved patient throughput.*

Efficiency has increased in the patient transport area as well. Within one month after HHS took over management of this function, the total transport time per patient had decreased by one minute per patient transported. “The industry standard is 20 minutes, but we’ve lowered it from 18.2 minutes to 17.2 minutes,” Cash says. This creates the opportunity for HHS to increase revenue by \$300,000.

*“We are happy, but not satisfied with this initial achievement—the opportunity still exists to reduce delays that affect total transport time,” Cash says.*

Cash and his team are currently leading a Transport Delay Process Improvement Team, in conjunction with the MSHA Quality Department, various JCMC clinical team members, and front line transport team members at JCMC. This team is analyzing causes and effects of the most common transport delays, and, in the coming months, will apply a systematic, problem-solving approach to lowering the number of transport delays, thus reducing total transport time. It is anticipated that

this will lead to \$300,000 of additional revenue potential for every minute of transport time gained.

“This type of total team approach to continual improvement is a primary example of our partnership value for both organizations,” Cash explains.

### A true partnership

“We care about everything our customers care about,” Cash explains. “Every member of the HHS management team eagerly participates in hospital initiatives including infection prevention, environmental and green projects, and process improvement committees.

*“We take every opportunity to be involved and help the medical center beyond the scope of EVS and patient transportation,” Cash says. “They see us as more than just their housekeeping department—and we see ourselves as more than that, too. We’re a part of their team.”*

“Sheldon and his team bring so many things to the table,” Tull says. “He and his entire staff are very responsive. We just pick up the phone and ask for something or make a suggestion, and they handle it immediately.”

In response, Cash says, “HHS focuses on the best systems and the best people that will drive the best results. Our level of expertise is based on the experience and knowledge gained by managing more than 130 facilities. We’re highly responsive and proactive.”

*“We constantly challenge ourselves to identify issues that could become problems, and address them before that happens,” Cash explains.*

“But if the customer makes a comment or has a request, we’re on it immediately and don’t rest until there is a complete, long-term solution.”

Mr. Tull sums it up this way: “We were somewhat reluctant to bring an outside company into our medical center, and during the first year there were some bumps in the road as we learned about each other’s cultures. But we have developed a true partnership that has exceeded our expectations and projections.

*“Our relationship with HHS is a partnership in the very best sense of the word,” Tull says, “and we couldn’t be more pleased.”*