

Top 4

Concerns for Home Health CIOs

New technologies are driving efficiency, increasing census, and improving outcomes, but home health CIOs tell us they have worries about safety, costs, and hardware.

Here are the top four concerns we heard from CIOs at a recent healthcare event.



#1

Cost Efficiency with Carrier Spending

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Cost Efficiency with Carrier Spending

Overspending?

With rising costs and CIOs looking to be as efficient as possible with spending, they're asking whether they are overspending on wireline and wireless services. It goes beyond trying to compare rates from one carrier to another. There's the question of usage. How do you ensure everything is being used and nothing is going to waste? It's a chore for financial teams to try to dig into the data and make the necessary assessments for strategic actions.

Home health providers can be challenged by their relationships with traditional carriers. In addition to connectivity, they often get their phones from carriers, which locks them into paying for higher-cost plans. They also often have to manage several carriers to get the right coverage—meaning they over-pay and don't have the ability to save by pooling data amongst users.



Voice and Data?

Another question is whether to buy voice and data services or just data. The latter offers significant cost savings, but when is it appropriate? Use cases like IoT for remote patient monitoring are obvious, but collaboration apps like Microsoft Teams work on data-only services, too, so some organizations may be able to move off voice services completely.



Connectivity?

Because home health workers are out in the field across large geographic areas, connectivity is a frequent issue. "There are times where we do not have any kind of service out there, which creates challenges when trying to make contact with the patients and using our EVV systems," Vince Moffitt, CEO of Basin Health Companies, told Home Health Care News recently. One carrier may be stronger than another at a particular patient's home, and the solution is a Smart SIM that automatically connects to the best available network. It does away with manually switching out SIM cards and managing multiple carriers—meaning home health workers always get the best connectivity available. Smart SIM services also manage the carrier plans, ensuring the best deals possible.

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Vince Moffitt, CEO of Basin Health Companies

#2

Lone Worker Safety

Home health workers have little control over their environment when they enter a person's home. Potential hazards include accidents, weapons, illegal drugs, verbal abuse, or physical violence.



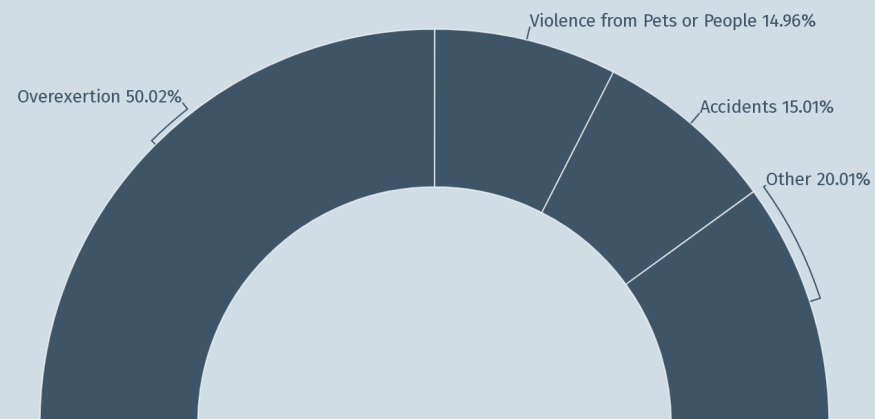
Lone Worker Safety

Unlike a traditional healthcare setting, home health workers have little control over their environment when they enter a person's home. Potential hazards include accidents, weapons, illegal drugs, verbal abuse, or physical violence. Industry experts say incidents are increasing, and socioeconomic status doesn't appear to be a factor. "It is happening across the board," Andrea Devoti, executive vice president of the National Association for Home Care & Hospice, [told Forbes](#). "Private pay patients, those with commercial insurance, those on Medicare, Medicaid, you name it."

A [study by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health \(NIOSH\)](#) found that between 2015 and 2020, more than 117,000 homecare workers were treated in ERs for injuries. Ninety-three percent were women. While more than half suffered overexertion injuries, 15 percent were hurt in accidents, and another 15 percent suffered violence from either people or pets.

Homecare Workers Treated in the ER

National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health (NIOSH) data collected between 2015-2020



In an industry that's long struggled to find enough workers, pairing people up for additional safety is usually not an option. Not only do home health organizations want to find better ways to protect their people, but they're conscious that if the industry gets a reputation for being unsafe, it'll exacerbate staffing challenges.

Thankfully, it's an area where new developments in mobile technology can make a big difference. Stratix works with device makers and software providers that offer solutions like connected teams that frequently check in on each other and share information about "problem" appointments. Mobile devices can be configured with panic buttons that bypass lock screens and send GPS locations to a call center staffed with experts on home health situations who will respond appropriately and dispatch help. Even if there's no emergency, workers can utilize features like "walk with me" if they're in an area or situation where they're uncomfortable.



Using Mobile Tech to Keep Home Health Workers Safe

Unlike a traditional healthcare setting, home health workers have little control over their environment when they enter a person's home. So, what do we do about it? In this podcast episode, we talk with Morgan Kircher, Chief Development Officer for Katana Safety, about technology solutions for keeping workers as safe as possible.

#3

Reliability & Support of Hardware

A mobile device not working affects everything from navigating to appointments to accessing patient records and recording new patient information.



Downtime isn't an Option

Home health organizations work on such thin margins that they can't afford downtime caused by device failures. A mobile device not working affects everything from navigating to appointments to accessing patient records and recording new patient information. Critical data on patient outcomes and RPM effectiveness can be contaminated or lost if a device fails. Hardware failures affect productivity, the data integrity needed to run and report on business compliance, the security of patient information, and more. Geographically dispersed workers are harder to support when they're out in the field. Companies often struggle to provide adequate support with overstretched internal IT teams



The first solution is an expert 24x7 help desk that can be easily reached by voice, text, and email. Technicians should be trained on the technology and processes because that familiarity eliminates the delay caused by a help desk that has to get up to speed when a call comes in. A good help desk can significantly reduce both downtime and the chance that a device is sent in for repair when it doesn't need to be.



How to Run a Great Mobility Help Desk While Keeping Costs Down

An ineffective mobility help desk adds to home health worker frustration & increases costs when unnecessary time is spent trying to resolve problems.

[Read the Blog](#)



Good endpoint management also plays a big role. A unified endpoint management (UEM) platform allows IT teams to manage every device in the organization—from PCs to IoT—from one place. That holistic strategy improves security and reduces costs. Routine IT tasks like updates and patches can be automated. It keeps equipment up to date, protected, and running well. If devices are lost or stolen, they can be locked remotely to protect patient information.

Downtime can also be minimized with a spare pool of pre-configured devices. A replacement can be picked up or shipped out overnight if something breaks. A pool of out-of-the-box ready backups is the best way to keep people productive even if equipment fails. Once a broken device is repaired or replaced, it's returned to the spare pool, ready to go when needed.



#4

Choosing the Right Devices and Features

Deciding what hardware to buy is a significant challenge for home health CIOs because it's a difficult balancing act.



Choosing the Right Devices and Features

Deciding what hardware to buy is a significant challenge for home health CIOs because it's a difficult balancing act. Cost is a top concern, but a cheaper device isn't necessarily cheaper if it breaks often or isn't powerful enough. The user experience is important, too, when it's difficult to attract and retain workers. CIOs must find equipment that gives workers the tools they need to be as productive as possible without busting the budget.



So, how do you find the right balance between cost and quality?

Start with the necessary features.

Having a checklist of "must-haves" helps you quickly eliminate some choices and better evaluate others.

- Will the device work as a barcode scanner for items like patient medication?
- Will caregivers need mobile printers for patient instructions or labeling?
- Is the device's camera good enough for getting the images required for advanced wound care?
- Will it run all the applications your organization uses? Is the processing power and connectivity good enough that there won't be delays?
- Are there AI features like real-time translation that make working with patients whose first language is not English easier?

Another consideration is lifecycle timing. How soon will you have to replace devices? What new technology do you anticipate, and will your device choice run that technology? Cheaper devices may need to be replaced sooner, but that might fit with your strategic plans.



How Stratix Can Help

Stratix has deep expertise in home health, and our team is always available to consult with you on your challenges. We've seen a lot, and we're up to speed on all the latest technology, so we can talk you through what we know works and what we know doesn't. We partner with all the leading OEMs and software providers, and that makes us completely agnostic in our recommendations.

From picking hardware to multi-carrier connectivity and lone worker safety solutions, we can help you find exactly what's needed for your organization. We also offer industry-leading support, UEM management, and complete device lifecycle services—including spare pool.

The home healthcare industry faces many challenges, but mobile technology can help if it's done right. [Reach out today](#) for our expert analysis.



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For an expert analysis of your environment,
complete the form.