



# MercyOne Elkader Medical Center

Unifying staff through COVID-19 and beyond

## Organization overview

MercyOne Elkader Medical Center, located in Elkader, Iowa, is committed to providing the highest quality healthcare in a multitude of settings. The 25-bed Critical Access Hospital is focused on staying current with the evolving technologies in the services it provides. MercyOne Elkader Medical Center works collaboratively with its community, patient population and providers to achieve excellence in healthcare. Its patients receive personalized care close to home.

## Challenges

- Communicate safely and effectively while working in isolation rooms and wearing PPE
- Replace two-way radios

## Vocera solution

- Vocera Smartbadge

## Results\*

- Conserved and saved money on PPE
- Streamlined communication in isolation environments
- Made it easy for staff to locate the right person at the right time
- Improved patient and care team experience

## Challenges

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit the US in 2020, MercyOne Elkader Medical Center, a Critical Access Hospital in Elkader, Iowa, needed a means to effectively and safely communicate while working in isolation rooms and wearing personal protective equipment (PPE).

“We initially tried using walkie talkies to help clinicians communicate with the rest of the care team and ask for supplies or assistance when working in a COVID patient room,” recalled Katie Pope, MLT(ASCP)CM, Education & Strategic Initiatives Manager at MercyOne Elkader Medical Center. “It didn’t take long for us to realize that the radios were cumbersome and had muffled audio. We knew we needed a more sophisticated solution to help us communicate efficiently, without risking contamination.”

## Vocera solution

After researching clinical communication platforms, MercyOne Elkader Medical Center leadership decided the Vocera system was the right solution to facilitate seamless staff communication during the pandemic, and beyond. They deployed the Vocera Smartbadge, a wearable communication device that combines smartphone usability with hands-free freedom, across their organization.

“We were drawn to the Vocera Smartbadge because the technology not only provides an easy way to communicate in isolation environments and while wearing PPE, but it also helps improve clinical communication overall,” said Casey Dahlstrom, RN, Clinical Nurse Manager at MercyOne Elkader Medical Center. “Fortunately, we were able to use CARES Act funding to secure the Vocera system, and our implementation and go-live was a quick and smooth process.”

Care team members working in isolation environments wear the Smartbadge, which is easy to disinfect, with their PPE to facilitate effortless communication with other staff. If staff need extra support or supplies, they can use their Smartbadge to easily connect with someone who can bring them what they need without having to fumble with phones or radios.

“The Vocera Smartbadge is a great solution that makes safe, efficient communication possible if you are wearing PPE,” said Pope.

Physicians, nurses, paramedics and ancillary staff at MercyOne Elkader Medical Center use the Smartbadge to stay connected. Staff are able to easily locate appropriate nurse or on-call physician when they need them.

“Because we are a Critical Access Hospital, staff wear many hats and are often running all over the building to find the right care team member. Vocera technology stood out to us because we knew it would boost our communication in a post-COVID environment as well,” Dahlstrom said.

## Results\*

Vocera technology makes it easy for MercyOne Elkader Medical Center staff caring for patients in isolation rooms to reach help when they need it.

“Being able to communicate with our team members while working in this COVID environment using the Vocera Smartbadge is just awesome,” Pope said. “The Vocera Smartbadge has helped us save money on PPE usage by decreasing the number of times we must enter and exit patient rooms. The Smartbadge has also saved us a lot of time because we can connect with the right staff member in an instant and provide great patient care while keeping everyone safe.”

The organization has also seen an overall improvement in clinical communication efficiency since implementing the Vocera solution. Nursing staff and paramedics are able to find the charge nurse or physician quickly via the Smartbadge, and physicians can easily connect with a patient’s nurse without calling multiple people.

“We no longer have to find a phone, call the nurse’s station and hope we catch the right person to get the information we need about a patient,” said Dahlstrom. “We are now able to find the right person and information we need while staying by our patient’s side.”

“We are thrilled we found a solution that makes it easier to connect with the right person at the right time, which benefits both our patients and staff,” said Pope. “Staff who were initially hesitant to adopt a new technology have shared that they love how the Smartbadge makes their jobs easier. Our patients have been very receptive to the new technology too.”

“Vocera technology stood out to us because we knew it would also boost our communication in a post-COVID environment.”

– **Casey Dahlstrom, RN**

Clinical Nurse Manager  
MercyOne Elkader Medical Center



“The Vocera Smartbadge has helped us save money on PPE usage by decreasing the number of times we must enter and exit patient rooms.”

– **Katie Pope, MLT(ASCP)<sup>CM</sup>**

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For More Information

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\*In addition to Vocera technology, the facility’s results may reflect the additional training, policies, procedures and specific configuration parameters implemented by the facility. The results are not necessarily representative of what another facility may experience

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