

Co-located after-hours care center

Key Insight: Specialized hospitals and single-specialty groups can partner to build new facilities and services that are more comprehensive than what they could have developed alone. This arrangement is best suited for organizations that provide specialized, complementary services.

CASE EXAMPLE **Women’s Health Connecticut and Connecticut Children’s**

Joint after-hours care center: Farmington, CT

Women’s Health Connecticut is a 200-physician independent women’s health group with 90 locations across Connecticut and Massachusetts. Connecticut Children’s is an academic medical center providing more than 30 pediatric specialties in 40 locations across Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New York.

The challenge

Women’s Health Connecticut and Connecticut Children’s both found that their patient populations weren’t receiving the specialized services they needed at standard urgent care centers. As a result, their patients often sought after-hours care from the ED instead. Not only is this costly and inconvenient for patients, but it also negatively impacts group performance in value-based care contracts.

How the partnership works

In May 2021, Women’s Health Connecticut and Connecticut Children’s partnered to create a joint ob-gyn and pediatric after-hours care center. Connecticut Children’s had already opened a new brick-and-mortar location in August 2020, so the two organizations decided to share the space and co-locate services for both women and children. While the after-hours care center shares a waiting room, it essentially functions as two separate clinics. Both organizations employ their own staff, bill visits independently, and are on separate EHRs.



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However, Women’s Health Connecticut and Connecticut Children’s split the lease according to square footage and jointly purchase shared medical supplies.

This combined after-hours care center is open to both new and existing patients Monday to Friday and some weekend hours. Patients can make same-day appointments, walk-in, or save their spot online for acute needs. Since the ob-gyn and pediatric services are co-located, women can bring their children with them for pediatric concerns while they are seen for their visit. Both organizations report that the joint after-hours care center is marketable and appealing to patients. It also provides a viable alternate to the ED for specialized patient populations, which helps with patient out-of-pocket costs and group value-based care performance.

The table below outlines the two co-located clinics in more detail.

	Women’s Health Connecticut	Connecticut Children’s
Patient population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women • Pregnant women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children (<21 years old)
Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gynecological, obstetric, and postpartum problem visits (e.g., UTIs, STI testing, pelvic pain, injections) • Ob/gyn ultrasounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pediatric urgent care services (e.g., allergies, digestive issues, mild asthma, flu, rashes, minor burns, pinkeye, earaches)
Clinical staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ob-gyns • APRNs • CNMs • Medical assistants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pediatricians • APPs • RNs
Site-of-care designation¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physician office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urgent care center

1. Billing practices vary based on site of care.

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The benefits for each party



Connecticut Children's

Parents are often consumer-focused when seeking care for their children. The urgent care center is a more convenient, lower-cost option than the ED. The center also reassures parents that their children are receiving appropriate pediatric care. By affiliating with a women's health group, Connecticut Children's also grows its patient base because the babies born to Women's Health Connecticut patients often then become patients of Connecticut Children's.



Women's Health Connecticut

In addition to the access and value-based care benefits mentioned earlier, this partnership is a low-cost, low-risk way for Women's Health Connecticut to expand their after-hours footprint. Splitting the lease with a partner helps to defray overhead costs. Women's Health Connecticut can also pilot the model before scaling to other markets.



Community

Both sides report that the joint after-hours care center is very attractive to patients. It is a more convenient, specialized, and less expensive option than a standard urgent care or ED. It is also a more integrated care experience since the after-hours care center uses the same EHR as patients' existing doctors. Not only is this beneficial from a patient experience perspective, but it also helps track utilization for value-based care.

Considerations for your organization

- **Appropriate licensure:** Determine whether you will certify your facility as an urgent care center or a physician office. This dictates scope of practice, necessary licensures, and billing arrangements.
- **Targeted recruitment:** Allow for ample time to recruit a specialized workforce. Hire staff who have previous experience working in pediatrics or ob-gyn. This practice arrangement is appealing to those who desire a flexible schedule and nontraditional hours.
- **Metrics:** Women's Health Connecticut and Connecticut Children's track two outcomes to measure success: profitability and value-based care performance. To measure profitability, they look at appointment counts and revenue. To assess value-based care performance, they review data on avoidable admissions.