CHG Healthcare



CASE STUDY:

How a rural Kansas community restored access to allergy services

Background

Colby, Kansas, with a population of 5,500, is the picture of a Midwest rural town and has both the advantages and challenges of rural living. Citizens Health, a rural health system serving Colby and the surrounding communities, faces difficulty in providing specialty care to residents who would otherwise need to travel hours away for it.

For allergy services, Citizens Health historically relied on a visiting allergist who provided care two to three days per month. This physician brought his own equipment and supported patients who needed allergy testing, immunotherapy, and biologic treatments.

When the allergist retired, Citizens Health was left without both specialist coverage and the infrastructure needed to continue offering allergy services. The loss created an immediate gap for hundreds of patients who depended on ongoing care.

The challenge

The organization faced significant barriers in restoring allergy services:

- No practicing allergists within a 200-mile radius
- Limited access for patients in the region due to long travel times
- Lack of internal infrastructure, equipment, and trained staff
- Difficulty recruiting a replacement physician to a rural location

Citizens Health needed a solution that could quickly reestablish services while also building a sustainable long-term model.

The solution

Citizens Health partnered with CHG Healthcare's Weatherby Healthcare division to address the problem using locum tenens in a phased approach that would meet immediate patient needs and support long-term program development.

Dr. Rekha Raveendran was placed as a locum allergist to help rebuild the service line. In addition to providing patient care, she played a critical role in establishing the clinic's operational foundation by:

- Supporting equipment selection and setup
- Developing clinical and EMR workflows
- Training nursing staff on key procedures, including skin testing, serum formulation, spirometry, and biologic and IVIG administration
- Creating standardized documentation templates, reaction kits, and pre-charting processes

This comprehensive approach resulted in a fully operational allergy clinic, supported by a confident, well-trained care team.

When Dr. Raveendran accepted a full-time position elsewhere, Weatherby ensured continuity by placing a second locum provider, Dr. Snehal Patel. Building on the established foundation, Dr. Patel provided consistent on-site care and supported a hybrid care model that incorporated telehealth, enabling Citizens to reach patients across a wider geographic area.

The results

The phased locum tenens approach delivered strong clinical and operational results:

- Allergy services were successfully reestablished and sustained.
- Hundreds of patients regained access to ongoing immunotherapy and biologic treatments.
- Care is now available to patients within a 200-mile radius.
- Nursing staff gained new skills and confidence through hands-on training.
- A hybrid care model expanded access across a large geographic region using telehealth.
- Continuity of care was maintained despite specialist transitions.

Leadership and staff at Citizens Health report strong clinical quality, seamless provider integration, and a renewed sense of engagement across the care team.

Citizens Health's experience demonstrates how locum tenens can work as a strategic solution for rebuilding and sustaining specialty services in rural communities. By combining immediate coverage with intentional program development, the organization restored access to essential care while creating a flexible, long-term staffing model.

> "We greatly appreciate Dr. Patel's expertise and knowledge in allergy testing and immunology, as this level of experience is difficult to find in this area.
>
> – Rhona McLaughlin,
> Specialty clinic nurse manager,
> Citizens Health

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