

## Alegent Health Implements Courion Solutions to Deliver Access Assurance



### Profile

Alegent Health employs more than 9,000 staff, including 1,300 physicians. They manage more than 100 sites of care, including 9 acute care hospitals.

### Users

10,000 users in facilities across Nebraska and Southwestern Iowa.

### Key Benefits

- Reduced provisioning time to application access from days to minutes.
- Implementing automated provisioning to more than 200 applications.
- Streamlining processes through the creation of roles for 80% of their workforce.
- Demonstrated compliance with audit requirements through automation.

Alegent Health is the largest not-for-profit, faith-based healthcare system in Nebraska/southwestern Iowa, with 9 acute care hospitals, over 100 sites of care that employ more than 9,000 employees including 1,300 staff physicians.

Sponsored by Catholic Health Initiatives and Immanuel Health Systems, Alegent Health offers an exceptional commitment to providing patient focused care for body, mind, and spirit and was ranked #1 in the U.S. in 2008 for quality/patient satisfaction according to Network for Regional Healthcare Improvement (NRHI).

Like others in healthcare, Alegent Health is increasing the amount of information and functionality offered on internal and external networks. They have implemented an Electronic Medical Record (EMR), helped create a Regional Health Information Organization (RHIO), and launched both physician and consumer portals.

In order to provide the highest standard of care, they provide patient and employee access to hospitals 24/7 with numerous points of entry and exit. They manage this access by allocating security and communication assets to their workforce such as pagers, identification cards, access cards, laptops, cell phones and more. All of these requirements create significant challenges to Alegent Health's security and operations.

### Identifying the Challenges

Developing, implementing and managing physical and logical access policies in a complex environment like Alegent Health is challenging. There are issues pertaining to patient privacy and sensitive data, the requirements of regulatory policies such as HIPAA, employee turn-over and attrition, and asset management. Additionally, there are operational requirements that need to be addressed in order to maintain internal service levels.

When a new employee is hired, they need access to clinical portals and applications, facility doors, and physical assets within short time period. The IT department needs to ensure that the right access is provided to meet individuals' job requirements, while at same time not provide more access than is necessary according to the person's role. And IT needs to manage access over the employee life-cycle as job requirements change and applications are upgraded or replaced.

Managers are expected to know the access requirements when someone is hired, transfers to another department or leaves the organization, such as: What logical access each employee needs or has, and to which applications? What physical access is required in the facility? What assets (pager, cell phone, laptop, ID, keys, etc.) need to be assigned or have previously been assigned to the employee?

Prior to the implementation of Courion, processes did exist to provide access to applications, work areas, and assets to perform one's job, but these weekly process reviews were time-consuming and complex. An Alegent Health manager would submit an electronic request related to action with an employee that included the option to select various applications in accordance with the employee's job function.

“By implementing the Courion Suite, Alegent has been able to significantly streamline provisioning processes, reduce overhead and administrative costs, and demonstrate compliance with the access policies in accordance with the auditors' recommendations.”

Troy Hottovy,  
Operations Leader,  
Technology Management

To help facilitate the request process, Alegen Health created the concept of the “Model User.” The Model User was the template by which a manager based the request for an individual’s access. The problem with the Model User approach was that the models multiplied like bunnies, so access was not being managed so much as it was being granted.

The process had other flaws as well. When the individual started the first day of work, he or she often lacked all applications needed to perform the job. At times, it took up to 3 days to get sign-on for an application after a request was submitted, and network access may have been eliminated once the person left Alegen Health, but access was not always de-activated from every single application for every person.

### Complying with Auditors

In 2006, Alegen Health’s internal audit findings included recommendations to improve provisioning in order to better enforce security policies. This would include assuring users have access to what they need to do their jobs and nothing more; removing users from a resource if they change roles or depart the organization; eliminating inactive or dormant accounts; and monitoring systems for unauthorized changes.

Alegen Health developed a goal to improve efficiency while reducing costs to address audit recommendations. These activities included: getting employees productive on day one of employment; automating repetitive and costly tasks; and enabling self-services functionality where appropriate. And lastly, Alegen Health wanted to lower their costs for regulatory compliance by ensuring that they know who has access to what at all times, providing integrated reports on activities to grant and/or remove authorizations, and enforcing and easing compliance with HIPAA.

### Implementing the Solution

In order to comply with the auditors’ recommendations and achieve goals, Alegen Health evaluated their systems and processes and reached a number of conclusions. With a high number of users and resources, traditional access control methods were labor intensive and error prone, so automation was an obvious solution to address these issues. Alegen Health decided that by instituting Role-Base Access Control (RBAC), they would be able to reduce both labor and manual errors, but they would have to invest the cycles to plan for developing the key roles required to maximize efficiencies.

What Alegen Health did first was engage the lines-of-business (LOB) to determine the primary benefits and governance requirements for the roles project. They also engaged the IT, HR and Legal departments to define roles in business terms, ultimately leading to an LOB acceptance review. They then took a phased approach to prioritizing access requirements starting with logical access, then physical access, then asset management.

The next step was to implement a pilot program which included broad roles, and the required support and reporting for new hires and then for changes. Upon completion of this activity, Alegen Health deployed these processes with the Courion Access Assurance Suite.

In order to ensure proper governance was achieved through the new role management processes, Alegen Health’s IT and HR teams worked together to map their existing structure of job families to specific accounts. This resulted in the ability to identify new, revised and retired job codes and new, upgraded and retired applications. Through both a top-down and bottom-up approach, the team would scrub the list of proposed roles and review for: access exceptions, over and/or under credentialing, policy conflicts such as segregation of duties, least privilege and user activity to arrive at the specific roles they needed. With periodic access verification by job code and application owners, Alegen Health is now able to use the Courion system to easily measure the progress and status of ongoing access compliance requirements.

Once the roles were finalized, the Sign-On Team identified the applications to be provisioned and the associated job codes. With more than 200 applications and approximately 1,400 job codes, the team created a table matching applications to codes. This table included 130 job codes for nurses alone! This exercise enabled Alegen Health to implement Courion for lights out provisioning. Instigated by a batch process from PeopleSoft, the Courion solution automatically created Active Directory, email and file share accounts for users according to their role. They are now able to auto-provision LDAP accounts for Document Imaging, PACS, Critical Care, MedScan and Clinical applications. Alegen Health is also integrating physical access into auto provisioning.

### Conclusions

With the implementation of the Courion Access Assurance Suite, Alegen Health is now able to identify not only what people have access to, but what people are actually doing. While the role definition process took a lot of work from cross-functional teams, the result of the effort is a better assessment of what access people have and how they are using this access.

Alegen Health has also achieved more effective license management. They are able to avoid over-provisioning access that isn’t required and automatically de-provision access if an application is not actively being used. The system allows them to easily understand necessary entitlement requirements and help identify the use of sensitive data.

Not only has Alegen Health improved the process of defining, applying and provisioning required access, but they have streamlined business operations through automation and optimized their governance processes.

For more information visit [www.courion.com](http://www.courion.com).

