TECHNOLOGY THAT CONNECTS:

Strengthening Safety, Compliance, and Workforce Stability for I/DD Providers

Guardian® Pharmacy Services

Overview

Community-based providers that support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) face a complex set of clinical, operational, and regulatory demands, many tied directly to medication management. From preventing medication errors to reducing staff burden and improving communication, technology now plays a powerful role in helping providers elevate safety, maintain compliance, and support more efficient workflows.

In an environment with multiple prescribers and complex support needs, even small communication gaps can have significant downstream effects. Coordination challenges, delays in information sharing, and inconsistent workflows can increase the risk of medication errors and place additional strain on direct support professionals (DSPs) and care teams.

These challenges highlight a clear need for tools that strengthen communication and ensure information flows reliably across shifts and care settings. When systems are connected and up to date, providers can support safer medication practices and create more stable, predictable workflows for their teams.

Technology that connects teams and streamlines communication is no longer a 'nice to have.' It's **essential infrastructure for safety, oversight, and operational efficiency.**

Technology's Role in Medication Safety

Medication-related issues remain a leading contributor to preventable harm across care settings. Nationally, medication errors account for more than 800,000 preventable injuries each year, and adverse drug events contribute to more than 700,000 emergency department (ED) visits, according to the Institute of Medicine and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Individuals with I/DD often have complex medication regimens and involvement from multiple prescribers, creating a heightened need for clear communication and accurate information flow among DSPs, leadership, and the broader healthcare team.

To reduce risk and enhance safety, integrated technologies such as EHR/eMAR and pharmacy system interoperability, secure pharmacy portals, HIPAA-compliant mobile messaging, barcode-enabled smart packaging, and digital pharmacy enrollment forms are becoming standard components of a modern medication management strategy. These tools serve as a safety net by:

- **Supporting accurate data entry, dispensing, and billing.** Integrated systems help ensure orders are communicated clearly, then entered, dispensed, and billed accurately, reducing misunderstandings and downstream errors.

- **Creating a real-time connection between staff and pharmacy teams.** When questions or discrepancies arise, staff can quickly clarify orders, verify medication changes, and resolve issues before they escalate.

- **Documenting and tracking drug use trends and clinical interventions.** Data insights highlight patterns, reveal risks, and help leadership quantify improvements in safety and outcomes.

- **Ensuring complete and accurate pharmacy profiles.** HIPAA-secure online enrollment ensures the pharmacy partner receives critical information—such as allergies, insurance information, and responsible party contacts—at the start of services, reducing delays, preventing errors, and improving medication continuity without relying on faxes or phone calls.

- **Providing an up-to-date view of each individual's medication regimen.** Better visibility across all orders and prescribers helps pharmacists identify potential medication-related issues early, including concerns such as drug interactions, omissions, and duplicate therapies.

These capabilities reduce variation, strengthen oversight, and help leadership teams feel confident they are aligned with regulatory expectations.

Improving Efficiency and Reducing DSP Burden

Staffing remains one of the most significant challenges for community-based providers of I/DD services. DSPs juggle demanding workloads, constant interruptions, and multiple communication channels.

Technology that improves information sharing and pharmacy communication can simplify daily workflows and enhance operational efficiency by:

- **Providing centralized oversight for leadership.** Dashboards and on-demand reports offer visibility into order status, refill needs, proof of delivery, and pharmacy correspondence.

- **Streamlining medication management workflows.** Routine tasks such as requesting refills, tracking order progress, printing MARs or TARs, accessing drug information, or reviewing medication profiles can be completed quickly without phone calls or faxes.

- **Sharing real-time updates and alerts.** Staff can monitor medication changes, delivery timelines, or urgent messages from any device, decreasing delays and improving coordination.

- **Enabling secure, HIPAA-compliant communication.** Messaging tools allow staff to communicate instantly with the pharmacy to exchange updates, clarify orders, and collaborate effectively without faxing or lengthy callbacks.

Providers consistently report these tools streamline daily operations, making processes faster, more efficient, and predictable, improving overall productivity across shifts.

88%
of community-based providers of I/DD services experience moderate to severe staffing shortages[1]

Integrated tools simplify daily tasks, cut down on phone calls and faxes, and **enhance the overall staff experience.**

Strengthening Regulatory Compliance

Medication management in I/DD comes with significant regulatory expectations, especially related to administration, documentation, and oversight. Integrated technology supports compliance by:
- Enhancing accuracy and consistency across medication processes.
- Reducing risks associated with transcription and order-entry errors.
- Supporting audit readiness with documentation trails and proof of delivery.
- Providing real-time reporting and analytics for ongoing oversight.

Standardized, digital processes make it easier for leaders to monitor performance, identify gaps, and maintain strong documentation.

Driving Clinical and Financial Performance

Connected technology tools also support measurable improvements in both clinical and financial outcomes by:
- Improving medication adherence through fewer late or missed doses and better communication.
- Resolving problems proactively to prevent issues that might otherwise lead to hospitalizations, ED visits, and other reportable incidents.
- Strengthening coordination during care transitions to reduce medication errors.
- Ensuring more reliable delivery timelines and reduced workflow variability.

These improvements support medication adherence, quality of life, and independence for individuals, while also contributing to more predictable operational costs for providers.

A More Connected, Supported Care Team

When communication is streamlined and information is easy to access, team members feel more capable, supported, and less stressed. Connecting DSPs directly with pharmacy teams has a meaningful impact on staff satisfaction for this very reason.

According to ANCOR, only 18% of community-based I/DD providers reported utilizing technology-driven solutions to support access to care in rural areas, highlighting a significant opportunity to expand practical tools that strengthen communication and coordination, particularly for providers serving geographically dispersed populations.[1]

Many providers leverage solutions such as GuardianHub and GuardianNote to provide the framework for this connectivity, giving teams a centralized portal for a more simplified and efficient workflow and a HIPAA-secure platform for instant messaging.

Leadership teams appreciate the transparency and reduced follow-up needed to confirm medication details or locate missing information. DSPs often report these tools make it easier to stay organized and complete tasks without disruption.

For many providers, this type of technology brings welcome relief to heavy workloads. By simplifying communication, reducing manual steps, and improving access to information, staff can work more efficiently, respond quickly to changes, and deliver care more confidently.

Only **18%** of I/DD providers report using technology-driven solutions to support access to care in rural areas[1]

Interoperability **reduces friction across the medication management workflow** and strengthens the consistency and quality of support.

The Future of I/DD Support is Connected

By embracing technology that improves visibility and information flow, including EHR-pharmacy system integrations, digital enrollment forms, secure pharmacy portals, and HIPAA-compliant messaging apps, providers can deliver consistent, high-quality support with greater confidence. When these tools work together, teams can prevent errors before they occur and maintain clear, consistent coordination across every shift. The result is a safer environment for individuals and a more predictable medication management workflow for staff.

Ultimately, these systems strengthen day-to-day reliability and support a higher standard of care.

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1. American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR). The State of America's Direct Support Workforce Crisis: 2025.

Guardian Pharmacy Services is one of the nation's largest and most innovative long-term care (LTC) pharmacy services companies. As medication management experts, we provide outstanding pharmacy care to providers supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and LTC communities including assisted living, skilled nursing, and behavioral health.

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