

# Cherokee Regional

## Depends on Relias to Adapt Rapidly and Responsively



In the past few years, **Cherokee Regional Medical Center** has seen constant, unprecedented changes. On-demand access to Relias training modules has

supported the 25-bed critical access hospital and its four clinics through care challenges from the pandemic, an influx of recent graduate hires, and the need to retain experienced staff.

Cherokee Regional's 280 employees include clinicians, paramedics, business office employees, and maintenance staff who may be full-time, part-time, PRN, or traveling staff.

Jodi Johnson, BSN, RN, Hospital Wide Education Manager oversees education for all of Cherokee Regional. She accomplishes this on the Relias Platform using training plans that automatically assign courses to staff based on role, experience, and area. "I wouldn't be able to live without the Relias training plans," said Johnson.



**CRITICAL ACCESS HOSPITAL**



**CLINICS**



### BENEFITS

- + Cherokee Regional met urgent responsibility shifts with just-in-time education for **280 staff** at **five locations**.
- + New grad nurses attained education to competently move into independent roles in as few as **10–12 weeks**.
- + On-demand learning **empowered staff** to advance as preceptors and leaders by self-enrolling in learning modules to support their new roles.

## Automation Eases the Pain Points

Automated, department-specific learning plans have helped new hires get off to a confident start. Managers have appreciated knowing that the mandatory attestations that their new hires have reviewed policies and regulatory requirements are 100% covered. Previously, the hospital conducted onboarding in a piecemeal fashion using PowerPoint presentations and other tools.

Onboarding is just one aspect of the staff education Johnson manages. Keeping track of who needed what training — along with the need to keep up with regulations and the latest evidence-based practices — was overwhelming, Johnson said.

Once Cherokee Regional began using the Relias Platform, that burden eased. Because the learning modules align with best practice and are updated continuously, she noted, “I don’t have to worry about that anymore.”

With the Relias Platform’s automation, learning administrators easily scheduled and tracked monthly mandatory education across the hospital system. Previously, in-person courses were held twice a year, and it was difficult to pull clinical staff away from their duties to attend. Staff can still attend live if they choose; otherwise, they’re assigned virtual training to be completed during downtime. “We promote doing the education in-house, during hospital time, for work-life balance,” Johnson said.

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— JODI JOHNSON, BSN, RN  
HOSPITAL WIDE EDUCATION  
MANAGER



## Features Support Compliance Tracking

Experienced learners have appreciated the ability to self-enroll in modules to obtain continuing education (CE) credits for licensure renewal. They especially appreciated that the Relias Platform is integrated with the American Heart Association's Resuscitation Quality Improvement Program, tracking completion of the Basic Life Support, Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support, and Pediatric Advanced Life Support modules. "It's been very beneficial for staff to have their certifications at their fingertips through Relias," said Johnson.

Also in demand at Cherokee are the cardiac education modules, which offer extensive education on rhythm strip analysis.

Having all training records in one place, sorted by staff member or type of module and easily printed out for reporting, was a lifesaver during a recent accreditation survey. "Surveyors were very happy with that," Johnson reported. Having access to modules appropriate for role-based needs has also improved employee engagement — a top priority during the Great Resignation.

Cherokee incentivizes education. Staff earn a pay increase if they obtain a certification, serve in a preceptor role, or mentor nursing students. Staff are also paid for their time if they attend training events, even if the training is not required for their role. "If they're hungry for education, we're going to compensate for that," noted Johnson.

### Using the Relias Skills Checklist,

new hires can do a self-assessment to find out where they stand in terms of competency. Supervisors can refer to the checklist during skills verification to validate a nurse's competency.



## Proactive Changes Meet Future Challenges

Cherokee Regional is well-positioned to cope with future challenges, such as the national trend of experienced nurses leaving their positions to become travel nurses. Many nursing applicants stepping up to fill those positions are brand-new graduates, both on the inpatient side and the Emergency Department (ED). Those new hires need substantial on-demand training.

There's also a growing trend of people who are new to the healthcare field entering business office roles. These employees need to know the basics about health systems and even topics such as bloodborne pathogens.

Relias modules support efficient onboarding for these staffing trends, which are likely to persist in coming years.

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In the near future, the hospital plans to use Relias to provide traveling nurses facility-specific education before they even set foot in the hospital.



## Staff Education for Responsiveness and Advancement

Johnson highlighted some specific areas of success with Cherokee Regional's use of the Relias Platform.

### JUST-IN-TIME TRAINING

When the pandemic began, staff needed to be confident in their ability to care for COVID-19 patients. Relias modules on the respiratory system and ventilators provided reassurance in the form of just-in-time education.

"To think that our facility was going to keep patients that were on ventilators was very intimidating at first. We had to implement a lot of education to provide a higher level of care than we've ever done before," Johnson said.

The range and depth of **Relias education** has helped staff succeed in new roles.

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### COMPETENCE AND CONFIDENCE BOOSTS

A recent staff survey revealed that new graduates with Cherokee for less than a year — especially in the ED and surgical areas — wanted more orientation time. Using Relias modules, Cherokee Regional overhauled onboarding for these employees.

New hires in the ED now move from a shadowing role to an independent role in 10 to 12 weeks. In-demand training topics include cardiac care, clinical decision-making, acuity levels, and trauma nursing.

"It's about retention and making sure that they feel supported and not just thrown out there to take care of patients when they're not well-prepared," said Johnson.

See how Relias can support your engagement and retention by adapting responsively for current and future demands.

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### OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEADERSHIP ROLES

The range and depth of Relias education has helped staff succeed in new roles. The hospital has seen staff move to preceptor roles or step up to become bedside leaders by providing feedback not just on an employee's competency but also on their comfort level with certain skills and communication.

With all the shifts in the market and skills needed, Cherokee Regional has depended on Relias to ensure comprehensive training for its new staff and provide advancement opportunities to support engagement and retention for all staff.

Being prepared with the right education helps Cherokee Regional clinicians be ready for the varied care needs of those who depend on them.