

The Right Dose: Customizing Hospital Food and Nutrition for Children

Executive Summary

Children's hospitals are a vital piece of the global healthcare infrastructure. In the U.S., there are more than 250 children's hospitals, which is approximately 5 percent the amount of adult acute care facilities. Each of these hospitals plays an instrumental role in caring for the health and wellbeing of their community, particularly for the socially and economically disadvantaged. In today's healthcare environment, they care for more than individuals but take a wholistic view of population health. Children's hospitals provide more than 95 percent of pediatric transplants, cancer treatments, and tertiary care cases.

(Source: Frontiers in Pediatrics, 2019.)



Food is an often undervalued and overlooked segment of a hospital's service offering. Many of the highest rated hospitals in the country recognize that food is a form of medicine and an important part of the healing process. For children's hospitals, the specialization of food must match the specialization of clinical care. Without it, there is a gap in the patient experience that leads to breakdowns and an environment that is not conducive to healing.

Morrison Healthcare (MHC) has a history of providing specialized food and nutrition service offerings to children's hospitals. In this white paper, we will take a look at three facilities where MHC has implemented new strategies and solutions that have had a quantifiable impact on the patient experience and the hospitals' results.



Food and nutrition services is pivotal **to improve the patient experience.**



Photo ShawnCMH

Children's Mercy, a Kansas City, Missouri-based healthcare system, is leading the way for compassionate care for the most vulnerable patients. Through their dedication to holistic care, innovation, and education, Children's Mercy is transforming the health and well-being of children across the region. We will focus on Children's Mercy's flagship 367-bed hospital in downtown Kansas City, the Adele Hall campus.



Photo Sichensliu

Children's Hospital of The King's Daughters (CHKD) is a 206-bed teaching hospital in Norfolk, Virginia. with special units for neonatal and pediatric intensive care, cancer care, acute inpatient rehabilitation, medical and surgical care, and transitional care. As a freestanding, full-service children's hospital, every inch of the facility and all medical team members are devoted exclusively to the needs of young people. Two years ago, CHKD hired Morrison Healthcare to revamp the hospital's Food and Nutrition Services (FANS) Department by aligning clinical and FANS teams, increasing safety protocols, and supporting operational and clinical goals.

Food and nutrition services is pivotal to improve the patient experience. Through technology, improved processes, new cost savings, an emphasis on safety, and recruiting the best people, hospitals have the opportunity to make a positive impact on their patients while being a responsible steward of the organization and community's financial resources.

One-Size **Does Not Fit All**

“One-size fits all” does not work in food and nutrition services. Hospitals and communities are unique. They need customized menus and food offerings that fit the audience’s needs and expectations. It is important to see the differences in hospital culture and communities in order to provide the highest level of service.

On the adult side, Morrison Healthcare has seen a push for regional cuisine in hospital dining for both the inpatient and retail setting. Additionally, diners are turning to plant-forward diets that emphasize plant-based foods in hopes of improving their health and decreasing the risk of conditions like high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and stroke. The changing perception of diners is leading hospitals to rethink menus and add more options, including plant-based and regional cuisine.

On the pediatric side of hospital dining, it is important to understand the audience and cater to their needs—much like looking at regional dining expectations. Too often hospitals serve a traditional adult menu. In truth, the smallest patients need special attention through customized menus that cater to their evolving palettes.

At Children’s Mercy, collaboration is the key to the joint success of clinical operations and FANS. In 2018, Children’s Mercy chose a new FANS contractor, but quality and execution issues soon became apparent. In less than a year, Children’s Mercy switched to Morrison Healthcare, where MHC’s teams were able to quickly integrate and make quantifiable improvements to the hospital’s FANS operations.

When Morrison Healthcare began working with Children’s Mercy Adele Hall, the hospital had numerous challenges to overcome. In the transition meetings between administration and the MHC team, leadership shared areas for improvement where the previous FANS vendor did not meet standards, including not properly allocating resources, missing key benchmarks, and failing to provide the right technological solutions. The team understood the importance of working together to create a partnership that drives results for patients. To ensure a smooth transition, Children’s Mercy provided a project manager who worked closely with MHC’s team to guide the integration forward. This role proved to be a major asset, leading to a more efficient and faster integration.



One of the most crucial elements the team handled was menu development. Patients have expectations when it comes to dining, particularly when they are children. The previous FANS vendor did not customize the food service offering to meet the needs of the audience, instead relying on menu items that did not speak to the unique needs of juvenile healthcare.

Through experience, MHC knows what children need. Working alongside the clinical nutrition team, FANS built customized menus for Children’s Mercy. In all, 22 different menus were developed in a short time. This provided flexibility and greatly improved the experience for the patients at Children’s Mercy Adele Hall.

Safety plays a major role in menu development and the tray building process. Menus are complex in a children’s hospital and there are numerous specialized diets for a FANS Department to adhere. That’s why it is critical to implement processes that ensure the right tray goes to the right patient. MHC made major improvements to the safety alert process, which has already paid dividends for patients.

Customizing the experience for the audience’s unique needs is pivotal for success in pediatric care and will drive improvements in the patient experience. After all, one-size does not fit all.

Patient-centric Care

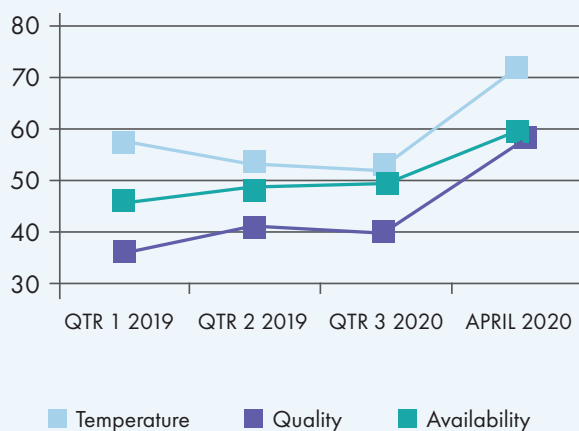
Patients are at the center of healthcare. Everything caregivers do is about improving outcomes and experiences for patients. In a children's hospital, it's important to have specialized care that is unique to the pediatric care environment. Younger patients have different fears and expectations. FANS associates have an opportunity to make a positive impact on the patient's day through every interaction. At Morrison Healthcare, food service teams are focused on delivering a patient-centric dining experience.

For CHKD, putting the patient first started with looking at how the youngest patients viewed their caregivers. For the team, something as small as uniform design can have a lasting impact on the experience. As a result of this focus on detail, the CHKD team developed new patient service uniforms that amplified the caring nature of the FANS team and the patients responded. Many commented on the new uniforms, saying they felt more at ease despite what was often a difficult and stressful situation. In addition, associates felt proud of the work they do and how they impact patients.

Small touches such as uniforms, along with significant process changes, have resulted in massive improvements to patient satisfaction scores at CHKD. Looking at Press Ganey data, patient experience scores in key areas like temperature, quality, and availability have more than doubled since Morrison Healthcare took on the CHKD account. This dramatic increase is the result of a commitment to excellence for "every patient, every meal, every day."

Press Ganey Results: FANS FY 2020

Pt. Experience Audit: January 2020



Two years ago, Morrison Healthcare created the Patient Solutions team, which has grown into a logistical heavyweight, bringing a new standard of excellence to FANS process improvement. This team works behind the scenes to improve patient meal assembly and delivery processes, align with operations, and provides valuable training for managers and frontline associates, which ensures hospital FANS meets the patient's expectations. New tools, research, and resources guide the process and provide new opportunities. By working in conjunction with onsite associates, clinical dietitians, chefs, and the Patient Experience team, hospitals have succeeded in streamlining operations and finding new efficiencies. It's a new way of looking at healthcare FANS that is driving change and innovation within hospitals across the industry. For children's hospitals, the patient solutions team provides a resource that creates a hyper focus on the patient's wellbeing.



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**Solutions that improve
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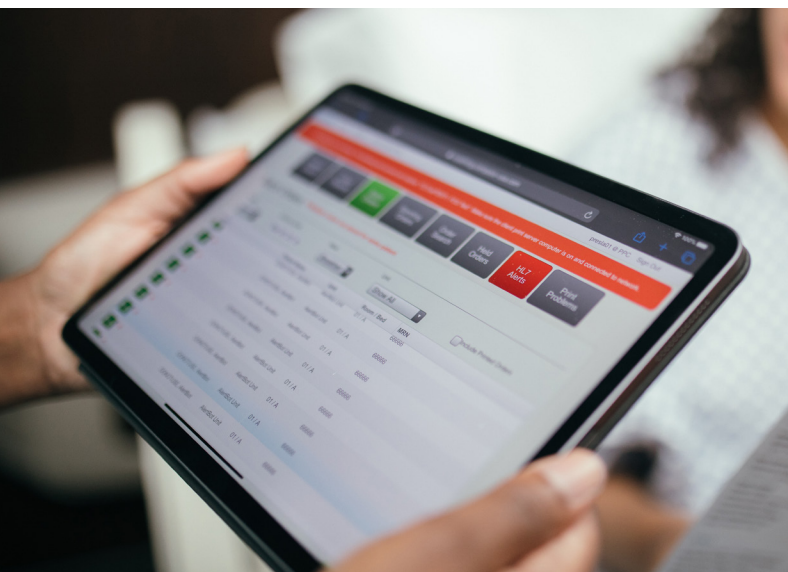
Clinical **Collaboration**

Patients are at the center of healthcare. Everything caregivers Healthcare cannot be successful operating in silos. That means food and nutrition service teams must work with clinical teams to provide patients with the best healthcare. This level of collaboration is not automatic but takes a commitment to building trust and creating pathways for conversation. Morrison Healthcare puts an emphasis on working with clinicians to find solutions that improve the patient experience and drive excellence across the care continuum.

The CHKD team quickly learned the value of coordination and collaboration. Prior to partnering with MHC, CHKD identified communication gaps and missed opportunities between FANS and clinical operations. From the beginning of its integration efforts, MHC teams looked for opportunities to improve processes, identify new efficiencies, and generate new sources of revenue. To make this happen,

FANS and clinical teams built a collaborative environment where associates can work together. Dietitians served as a key touchpoint. Through new teaching opportunities and enhanced exposure in leadership roles, MHC dietitians made an immediate impact. Patient care improved while time spent documenting actions decreased, improving the experience for both patients and clinical teams. As a result, dietitians were able to see 2-3 additional patients each day, allowing for greater efficiency and wider patient coverage.

Coordination between clinical and FANS teams has become a critical component of providing excellent care. Without this collaboration, there are gaps and patients are exposed to unnecessary risk. By finding the right partner who understands the power of collaboration and creates processes that empower teams, children's hospitals will make a quantifiable impact on their organization and patients.



Innovative Technology

Technology is at the heart of innovation in healthcare, representing an important tool to ensure our smallest patients are receiving the care they deserve. For food and nutrition services, Morrison Healthcare has created proprietary solutions that drive efficiency, speed, and lower costs.

Children's Mercy gravitated to MHC's technology solutions. The previous FANS vendor used third party software that would not interface with the hospital's electronic health records, which meant staff had to manually enter data for hours without safety checks and balances. In addition to being inefficient, it created patient safety concerns. By the third day of integration with Children's Mercy, MHC's teams were well on their way to fixing these issues. The team immediately implemented MHC's proprietary ordering and delivery tracking programs, MyDining and MyDelivery, which provide enhanced reporting so leaders can pinpoint areas for improvement. This program proved to be crucial for a smooth transition for the FANS team.

"We have to be on the cutting edge of technology," said Scott Gage, Vice President of Support Services at Children's Mercy Hospital. "Our patients are proficient with smart phones, tablets, and all other types of technology. We need to meet them where they are. That's why we chose Morrison Healthcare's MyDining application. It is easy to use, gives patients the type of technology experience they expect, and provides our teams with a rich set of data to improve our processes."

MHC's technology stands out because it was designed by chefs, dietitians, and operational experts with an emphasis on creating the ideal dining experience for the patient. The in-house development team worked with nurses and hospital leaders to ensure the technology benefits both the patient and the caregiver.



MyDining—MyDining is Morrison Healthcare's personalized patient meal-ordering system. Patients have the ability to place orders by phone to a call center or a patient dining associate will visit the room to take orders. MyDining makes it easy to log, track, and report on meal orders while its operational features improve order accuracy, enhance patient safety, and boost patient satisfaction scores. MyDining works in tandem with Webtrition, MHC's web-based proprietary recipe and nutrition database. This makes the process of updating a patient menu more efficient and far less labor intensive compared to other menu software programs.



MyDelivery—MyDelivery is an integrated solution that measures and reports on the speed of service. When integrated with MyDining, MyDelivery tracks delivery times to ensure proper temperatures and help drive patient satisfaction. This information is valuable to measure the success of the FANS team and to better understand patient satisfaction scores.

App-based Quality Tracking – The days of paper shuffling in foodservice operations and banks of filing cabinets are slowly phasing away. MHC's Patient Solutions team has worked in collaboration with the technology team to redesign common tracking forms into a digital format accessed by a company issued iPad. Tracking the results of test trays, accuracy check, and more occur with the click of button.

With the implementation of MyDining and MyDelivery, MHC made an immediate impact on delivery times at Children's Mercy by receiving real-time data on deliveries, which allows the team to identify focus areas. In a short timeframe, delivery times exceeded expectations dropping below the 45-minute benchmark. Tray delivery time has dipped as low as 22 minutes. Experience, technology, and clarity of mission have allowed the MHC team to hit the ground running and make a quantifiable impact on patient care.



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Safety **First**

Safety is paramount in healthcare, particularly when caring for the smallest patients who may have compromised immune systems or underlying health concerns. Food is medicine and we must ensure it is used to foster healing. Technology, standardization, and improved resources can boost these efforts and deliver new levels of patient safety.

For CHKD, it started with the Milk & Formula Room. When Morrison Healthcare arrived at CHKD, the Milk & Formula Room was outdated and inefficient. Donor milk and formula were received, handled, stocked, mixed, and delivered from the Formula Room, which was on a different floor from the NICU. This room was small and could not store a mother's breast milk for her child. That meant extra work for NICU nurses, who were responsible for safely handling mother's milk. It was a time-consuming process for nurses that created logistical difficulties and increased the potential for errors.

One of the MHC team's first projects was to revamp the Milk & Formula Room. In May of 2020, the new Milk & Formula Room opened with an updated design, equipment, and location. The new space is outside the NICU and includes office space for dietitians, saving time and increasing collaboration between FANS and clinical staff. With more space, the new Milk & Formula Room houses mother's milk for the NICU, which also helps prevent errors through

standardization and technology. In the first few months of operation, the Milk & Formula Room has already impacted patient care and the nursing staff's time allocation.

The "Timeless" program has added a new level of efficiency to the milk and formula service. Timeless is a custom software solution that tracks and traces the handling and feeding of breast milk, donor human milk, and infant formula using a barcode system. Using scanners to scan bar codes found on the infant's wristband and the label generated for the prepared formula from the doctor's order, Timeless ensures the right baby gets the right formula at the right time. Along with error reduction, the program automates documentation for feedings, which makes a big difference for nursing staff as they manage their time on the floor.

MHC also created a new multi-step allergy procedure to prevent the serving of food allergens to patients with allergies. Allergy First seeks to increase communication. At the beginning of meal service, FANS teams hold an "allergy huddle" to discuss potential allergens in the food and prepare for service. All allergy meals are delivered on special trays and dietitians are involved in the planning of meals. Through process improvements, standardization, and technology, patients are safer.



Top Talent

People are at the center of healthcare. There's a reason companies are finding competition for top talent. The best associates and caregivers provide the best care, which improves the patient experience and outcomes. Morrison Healthcare has invested in its people through recruitment and retention strategies that create career paths and provide incentives. The goal is to keep the best staff and motivate them to provide excellent care for patients.

For Children's Mercy, the previous FANS vendor was unable to deliver on crucial staffing needs. From day one, MHC brought in many of its national leaders and subject matter experts to assist with the integration. With support from across the company and the ability to bring in talent, MHC put the right team in place and scaled up operations quickly.

Putting the team in place is one step, but it is also important to retain that top talent. The FANS industry is known for high turnover rates, but MHC is combatting that with robust

retention strategies and career building opportunities. So far, Children's Mercy is seeing incredibly low turnover with retention rates as high as 95 percent during the summer months. By properly resourcing the FANS Department, MHC provided an immediate impact to the organization.

As a whole, Morrison Healthcare is taking care of its people. Beyond their role in improving the patient experience, the Patient Solutions team has sought to improve retention of frontline patient dining associates through new programs. The results have been remarkable. Through a robust onboarding process that provides new hires with specific skills and processes they need in order to safely serve patients, MHC accounts have seen a 25 percent improvement in associate retention.

By taking care of the frontline associates and building careers, hospitals are better equipped to care for patients. It is an investment in the people who serve our patients.

Cost Savings

Morrison Healthcare has a unique view of children's hospitals and can use its resources to realize new efficiencies, patient satisfaction improvements, and financial savings. It takes an innovative and creative approach by food and nutrition services to find areas for improvement while increasing revenue.

At CHKD, MHC was able to find significant financial savings from an unexpected source—water. Through newly negotiated agreements that provide free bottled water to the Milk & Formula Room, MHC has saved CHKD \$43,000 a year. This savings frees up funds for additional investments in the facility and programs. Additionally, CHKD had an existing outpatient nutrition consulting program, but it was not a revenue-generating venture. MHC leaders saw the program's potential and pushed to further integrate nutrition consulting into outpatient physician offices. In its first year, the program netted \$35,000 in revenue.

Technology brings efficiency and cost savings, but this level of innovation does not have to be expensive. If done well, it can bring cost savings to healthcare organizations through technology and process improvements. Even the cost of implementing Morrison Healthcare's industry-leading, proprietary technology solutions results in savings. When compared with other dining technology solutions, MyDining provides a more robust experience for patients and administrators, while providing considerable savings. Other technology solutions don't offer this level of service and come with hidden costs. MyDining comes at a considerably lower cost for a heightened level of service.

When compared with CBORD, MyDining saves mid-sized accounts approximately \$24,000 per integration. For an account using Computrition, a switch to MyDining will result in approximately \$44,000 in savings. For mid-sized accounts operating on Vision, the savings will be around \$42,000. For hospitals that have adopted MyDining, the savings have the potential to drastically alter the financial position of a FANS department, while boosting the patient experience.

CBORD	Small Account		Mid Size Account	
	MyDining	Competitor	MyDining	Competitor
Software Total	\$46,120	\$59,678	\$46,120	\$61,038
Services Total	\$10,170	\$35,745	\$10,991	\$48,926
Year 1 Annual Fees	\$15,168	\$11,848	\$15,168	\$12,257
Discount Total		\$17,849.70		\$25,661.70
Total without Equipment	\$71,458	\$89,421	\$72,279	\$96,559
Equipment/Wiring/Shipping	\$23,813	N/A	\$14,516	N/A
Start Up Costs for Budget	\$95,271	N/A	\$76,111	N/A

The results are there. Nationally, MHC saves clients 11 percent on average when compared with self-operation. With a mind on maximizing budget efficiency for children's hospitals, MHC provides cost efficient solutions that drive revenue and provide a fiscal boost to a FANS department.

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Conclusion

Children's hospitals are the bedrock of the U.S.'s healthcare system. It is critical to start the youngest patients on a journey of health and wellness. An emphasis on food can reap big results for a hospital's operations, patient satisfaction scores, and clinical outcomes.



Through collaboration with clinical teams and an investment in technology, hospitals are equipped with data to make better decisions and drive efficiency that extends beyond the Food and Nutrition Services Department. Looking at the Children's Hospital of The King's Daughters, their integration with Morrison Healthcare's teams provided significant financial gains while driving excellence across the care continuum. At Children's Mercy, food and nutrition services team members as well as clinicians found that new pathways and innovative technology brought teams closer together, improved the caregiver work experience, and provided patients with a safer environment.

Innovation does not have to be expensive, but it does take finding the right partner. Morrison Healthcare provides excellent food and nutrition services that are uniquely designed for children. After all, food is medicine and children need just the right dose.



To learn more about how we can provide superior patient experiences, please visit morrisonhealthcare.com or call 1-800-2CLIENT.