

# An Efficient, Effective & Repeatable Recipe for the Roll-Out of Epic

## An Ardent Health Services Success Story

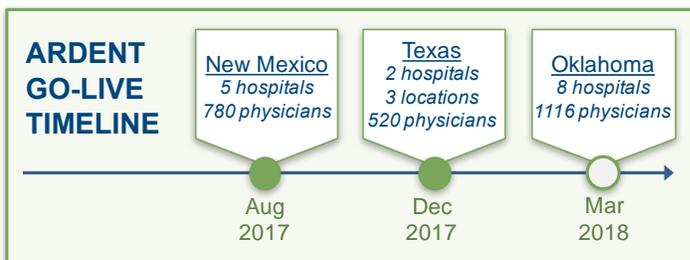
### Background

**Ardent Health Services** is an investor-owned health delivery organization with 21 hospitals and 600 physician practices located in seven states. In 2016, Ardent selected the Epic enterprise EHR and revenue cycle system for all its hospitals and physician practices. The organization initiated the build/installation at its hospitals and clinics in New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas with plans to continue rolling out the system across the remaining facilities in four additional states.

Ardent is the only investor-owned system to utilize Epic’s full revenue cycle functionality across its entire organization. Impact Advisors was engaged as Ardent’s implementation quality assurance partner to provide guidance and recommendations to executives and to the Board of Directors, and assist with validation of key implementation decisions while avoiding common pitfalls.

The goals for the Ardent Epic project were threefold:

- 1) Build a **single Epic platform** to serve the entire enterprise by leveraging the Epic foundation system as a model.
- 2) Develop a **fast, lean, and highly standardized approach** to remove variation and drive consistent, excellent patient care based on demonstrated best practices.
- 3) Establish an **efficient Epic implementation model** that could be repeated by Ardent in future markets.



- 21 hospitals
- 3,500+ licensed beds
- 19,000+ employees
- 600 employed physicians
- \$3+ billion in revenues

*“Ardent Health Services’ governance, sophisticated depth of knowledge, and discipline are all contributing factors to their successful EHR implementation, best described as efficient, effective and repeatable.”*

*- Adam Tallinger, VP, Impact Advisors*

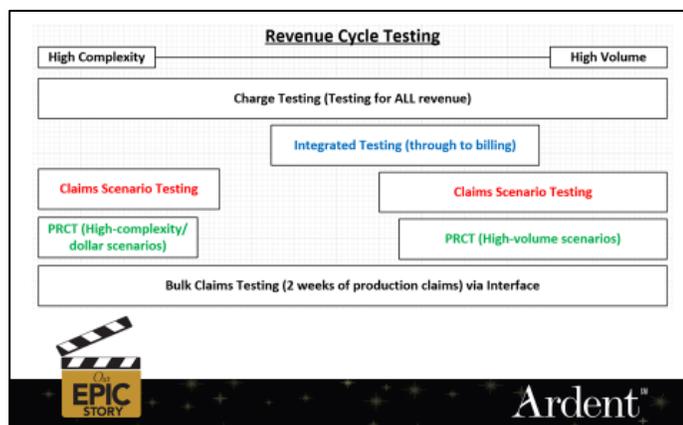
*“Impact Advisors distinguishes themselves in many aspects such as depth of experience, track record and many other professional qualifications. A primary reason they were selected was their commitment to determine what would make Ardent successful – rather than focusing on what had made their last customer successful.”*

*- David Graser, SVP/CIO, Ardent*



## Key Results

- Build and testing for all facilities completed prior to the first go-live.
- Minimal top tier issues at go-live.
- No patient safety events.
- Good clinical adoption of the system.
- Success in training and maintaining the targeted go-live support including roll-off schedule.
- Thorough revenue cycle testing, ensuring expected performance after Epic conversion.
- Division CFOs, Hospital CFOs and key revenue cycle operational leadership participated in the ARCR (Access and Revenue Cycle Readiness) governance team.
- 100% of charges were tested (the figure on the right outlines the testing approach)
- Revenue for the first two divisions returned to baseline within two to three weeks after conversion
- At three months post-go-live, the Albuquerque market exceeded Epic's average top quartile performance in all financial graph package indicators, including:
  - Epic Cumulative Charges
  - Epic Cumulative Payments
  - DNFB (Discharged, Not Final Billed) Days
  - CFB (Candidate for Billing) Days
  - Coding Days
  - Claim Edit Days
  - Billed Lag Days
  - Claims with Open Denial Days



## Success Factors for an *Efficient, Effective, and Repeatable* Implementation

There were a number of factors that were critical to Ardent's success. *"Ardent's dedication to structure and continuing commitment to guiding principles sets them apart from the crowd toward building a process that is not only efficient but also repeatable,"* noted Adam Tallinger, Vice President at Impact Advisors. Other factors included:

- 1. Engaged operational leaders with a strong knowledge of the business.** Engagement started at the top of the organization. David T. Vandewater, CEO of Ardent Health Services, knew that implementing Epic gives Ardent a distinct competitive advantage. The company will recognize improvements in patient care from having all Ardent hospitals and physician practices aligned on the same EHR platform while supporting their ability to grow in a competitive M&A environment. Mr. Vandewater was a key part of the project leadership team—from hosting standing weekly progress meetings, to calling third-party vendors to expedite contracts, to contacting individual physicians to ensure training attendance. *"Our*

*company approached the conversion to Epic not as an IT initiative but rather a quality and operations initiative,” Vandewater said, “Giving ownership and accountability to our entire management team ensured a smooth transition to Epic.”*

The first Ardent division to go-live with Epic was New Mexico, and division President Ron Stern shared, *“Ardent ensured that we had the needed resources to successfully launch Epic. Our team recognized early results—a more streamlined system of workflows and faster communication among providers, staff and patients.”*

At the operational level, stakeholders were engaged from a clinical perspective, as well as a business perspective. Ardent managers had a strong knowledge of their departments’ key business metrics and the driving forces behind any variances in charges and patient volume. This level of engagement and knowledge made it easier to identify potential issues and make necessary course corrections along the way—both in planning and testing, as well as post-live.

- 2. A culture of efficiency.** Ardent’s foremost focus is on providing the highest quality patient care while increasing efficiencies. This inherent culture carried over into many aspects of the implementation. For example, Ardent took a lean build approach by staffing to minimum levels for the implementation, focusing almost exclusively on employed staff. They added temporary external resources as needed for targeted, shorter engagements.

Efficiency was a core tenet of Ardent’s approach. The team carefully built and adhered to what was referred to as “the Ardent Standard,” which was based on Epic’s Foundation Build (unless there was a compelling business reason not to do so), and built a single instance of the EHR that will support the entire enterprise.

According to Ardent’s Vice President of IT and Epic Program Director, Rick Keller, *“Adhering to the ‘Ardent Standard’ gave us the plan to move forward with proven results and helped drive efficiency. We were able to set expectations up front with our end-users and proactively address their questions.”*

- 3. Empowered, decisive project leadership.** Rather than using a wide consensus-based approach to decisions, key implementation decisions came from a select group of leaders from across the company. Stakeholders were represented in the planning process by these select groups of individuals that were chosen strategically and empowered to represent their peers across the enterprise. They focused on the change process to implement the Ardent Standard.

Once a decision was made, Ardent did not revisit it unless clear evidence emerged that it was critical to do so. This avoided the loss of traction seen in many implementations where decisions are delayed, rehashed, or changed based on parochial preferences.

- 4. Trust in the process.** Ardent learned from the success of other Epic organizations and their journeys. A willingness not to recreate the old but to adopt a model system and content allowed Ardent to quickly set up a world-class EHR design that has a proven track record in the market. Their goal was 95 percent adherence to the Epic Foundation System, which they easily met.
- 5. Dedication to milestones.** When an implementation schedule falls behind, often the reaction is to delay tasks for subsequent go-lives, which can adversely impact downstream roll-outs. Ardent took the more challenging route of adding resources as needed to remain on schedule.

Spending more hours upfront to address outstanding project tasks was a core principle. A cleaner single build, less risk for regression test failures between markets, and more time to manage activation-readiness tasks gives an advantage to roll-outs.

- 6. Validation and guidance from a trusted external partner.** Another essential component was Ardent's early enlistment of Impact Advisors. According to Adam Tallinger, Vice President and Delivery Service Executive at Impact Advisors, *"Our role was not to come in as an auditor or to identify problems or deficiencies. We were brought in as a partner to help them succeed."* Through meetings and regular reports, Impact Advisors helped validate key decisions, provided guidance on opportunities and risks, and offered real-world recommendations on how to make any needed changes.

*"Having a trusted partner with this depth of experience was critical to helping us maintain a rapid pace while ensuring there were no compromises to patient care,"* said Graser. *"Impact Advisors provided valuable insight in many facets of the project, where those aspects were not always apparent from Epic's methodology. They provided feedback to our Board and a level of transparency that was crucial."*

## The Bottom Line

To summarize, Ardent had a very comprehensive and broad implementation with minimal resources, in a compressed time frame, and achieved outstanding results. There were many facets that contributed to these successes but most notably was a focus on a standardized system to provide outstanding care that can be quickly adopted across the enterprise as new assets are acquired. This discipline and a maintained focus on standardization will allow Ardent to continue to adapt to meet the needs of an ever-changing industry as well as expand the Ardent Standard to future markets.

*"We look forward to seeing Ardent continue the successes seen with their first two markets in the continued roll-outs to Tulsa, their America's division, and beyond,"* remarked Ted Reynolds, Vice President at Impact Advisors.