AlayaCare

Top Predictions for

Home-Based Care in 2023

And how to leverage each to grow your agency

Introduction

At the dawn of 2022, we witnessed surging demand for home-based care, which had become a political priority in many countries. The primary obstacle to growth seemed to be labor shortages. With this in mind, we may have expected 2022 to be the year when reimbursement rates in the U.S. finally rose in equity, better enabling agencies to compete for talent and drive this industry forward.

That didn't, however, quite come to pass.

So, it's time to think about what 2023 will bring as our industry continues to evolve. This year, care organizations will be forced to focus on what they can control to deliver quality care in a sustainable fashion. By doing so, new opportunities will emerge: the potential, as yet untapped, to gain greater control of their own destiny.

For home-based care in 2023, we can expect key themes to surface:

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A greater adoption of technology to shore-up operations, reduce overhead costs, and improve the experience of all staff.	A greater focus on developing talent to ensure caregivers maximize their abilities and offer new training opportunities in a consistent upskill effort.	A greater pursuit of new funding sources as we seize our position as an in-demand service.

Continue reading for five most important considerations for agencies in 2023.

Adrian Schauer, CEO and Founder of AlayaCare
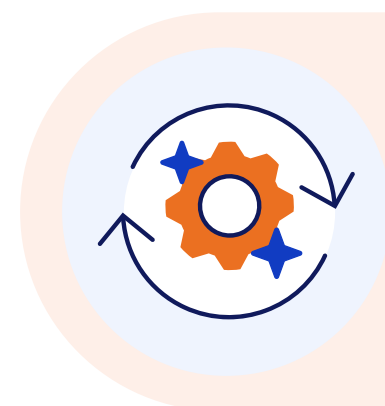
1. Declare war on repetitive tasks

Seize the power of automation in your software system

I would estimate that agencies spend as much as one-third of their gross profit coordinating and supervising the care being delivered. The resulting human cost is far too much effort spent on administrative tasks and not enough on what all home care staff should be predominantly engaged in: decision-making and building relationships with clients and caregivers.

It's time to declare war on repetitive tasks. How? At a high level, dissect your workflows and embrace the full potential of automation tools built into your software systems – any modern effective platform has the capability to efficiently handle all repetitive tasks.

- Alaya Connector and workflow automation solutions like Element5, powered by both AI and robotic process automation (RPA) – can learn and then execute rules-based tasks and help automate tasks including intake, authorization, RCM, and clinical processes.

The function that has outsized impact on home-based care operations (and also on caregiver satisfaction) lies within coordination. Schedule & route optimization and automated dispatch are now poised to revolutionize back-office operations.

- AlayaCare's vacant visit automation tool has led to huge time savings for schedulers while also reducing travel time and boosting common KPIs like increasing continuity of care, maximizing caseload per coordinator, and reducing overtime.

Beyond repetitive tasks, it's important to help manage where staff attention is directed – and help point it at the right things.

- AlayaLabs' note flagger tool, coming in 2023, uses "natural language processing" (NLP) to scan all the notes and flags for only those that indicate clinical risk or a change in condition that needs attention. This empowers supervisors to more effectively manage large caseloads.

- AlayaCare's data and intelligence engine can automate reports to simplify and reduce time spent on billing. and payroll.

2. Simplify operations to become part of care delivery
Lose the friction, leverage the freedom

Streamlined operations is admittedly a catchphrase – but for good reason. Achieving true back-office efficiency is within any agency's control, and capitalizing on what technology can offer is the ticket to stripping away friction and finding greater efficiency and collaboration.

A nimble, flexible back-office is one such simplification – and part of that is making administrative efforts legitimate aspects of care delivery. For example, software tools that connect everyone inside a circle of care (directly and asynchronously) create a clear bridge of communication and visibility for clients, families, and their care providers. These tools also slash the need for frequent communications between parties, doing away with unnecessary emails, messaging and calls.

• The AlayaCare Family Portal is built so clients, family members and trusted providers can view up-to-date care plan information in a secure, accessible place available anytime, anywhere and on any device, laptop or mobile.

Our Family Portal also lets families communicate with the care providers in a two-way sync, contributing to more clarity around tasks and care.

• AlayaLabs' risk triage tool works in tandem to highlight clients at increased (or increasing) clinical risk, who need prompt attention.

Let's take on another workflow ripe for simplification: working with subcontractors. Automating offers and referrals and syncing data from the supply-side system to the demand-side system propels growth and efficiency – including the ability to deploy additional caregivers when needed – and tighter collaboration in the industry.

• At AlayaCare, we built a Marketplace through which you can automate referrals to your network of subcontractors. Any data associated with that care delivery (e.g. punch data, progress notes) are immediately synced back to your system. Digitizing all inbound and outbound referrals in one place… talk about time savings.

3. Offer continuous learning and growth opportunities
Upskill to attract and retain top talent

Labor shortages and constant churn remain the largest, most persistent problems that we deal with as individual providers and as an industry in general. This continues to be the case up and down the skills continuum, from aides to PSWs, nursing and therapy assistants, registered nurses and physical/occupational therapists.

It will be crucial to invest more in continual upskilling efforts in 2023 to get a leg up on this ongoing challenge. Investing here is something any agency can prioritize to distinguish themselves from the competition. Current and prospective employees seek, and almost expect, learning and growth opportunities from their employer––and by providing them, agencies can explore new services to meet a broader client base.

One reliable and underused key to attracting and retaining talent: integrate continuing education tools and training resources into a platform that caregivers can freely access on their own watch. Not that you have to build these resources yourself––integrate career development programs that specialize in home care (e.g. Nevvon, CareAcademy) into your systems.

- AlayaCare University is our integrated, on-demand eLearning Hub that gives agencies a personalized online training centre for employees to reskill and upskill and gives leaders a window into all training engagement across their agency.

- AlayaCare's employee retention dashboard is a tool used to spotlight care workers that are most prone to attrition with targeted directives that can help retain the employee and offer them growth opportunities to ensure tenure.

Meanwhile, in step with bolstering training opportunities, it's important to maximize the impact of the talent inside your employee base. Deploy tools that make people's jobs more efficient, relieve admin burden across the board, and focus on having them work at the top of their skills and licensure.

For example, clinical staff can use video conferencing to manage more clients without increasing their load and risking burnout. Our best-in-class mobile app can help all individual workers operate with maximum flexibility, with the ability to access data and clinical documentation even in offline mode. Our Vacant Visite Optimizer helps match the right clients to a care worker's skill set, available schedule and proximity, making their client-facing time as convenient and efficient as possible.

- Talent retention remains a major challenge. AlayaCare's employee retention dashboard can make upskilling initiatives more successful by spotlighting the care workers that are most prone to attrition with targeted directives that can help retain the employee and offer them growth opportunities.

4. Break convention and seek new funding sources

Hospital at home, anyone?

As large systems move slowly, 2022 did not bear the fruit of rate increases from third party payers. Hospitals are in crisis and, no matter the slow pace at which health systems evolve, we all know that a "Hospital at Home" focus is the necessary model of the future. There is an opportunity here for agencies to strategize a new approach – and reimbursement – directly with hospital administration.

While some programs had been under development prior to the pandemic, the crisis precipitated by COVID-19 kicked the hospital-at-home model into high gear. For example, the CMS' Acute Hospital Care at Home waiver means inpatient-level care can be delivered at home at the same reimbursement rates as hospital-based care. While there are some concerns that the CMS waiver will expire once the U.S. government declares an official end to the pandemic State of Emergency, many feel that the genie is out of the bottle and will not readily disappear, particularly given this model's value.

Like telemedicine, the hospital-at-home model has a proven track record for better outcomes while lowering delivery costs. When practitioners provide in-home care, they are able to observe many social determinants of health that they would never have seen had the patient been hospitalized. Not to mention that hospital stays inherently bring a higher risk of exposure to infections.

Yet, some of these benefits can be realized by other home-based care agencies, even without being officially designated as a hospital-at-home. In states where home- and community-based services are able to deliver in-home clinical care, the same benefits can be realized. What's more, agencies can prevent hospitalizations entirely, opening the door to attractive risk-sharing agreements with their payers.

In 2023, agencies have the footing and experience to make a different pitch to different groups more than ever before.
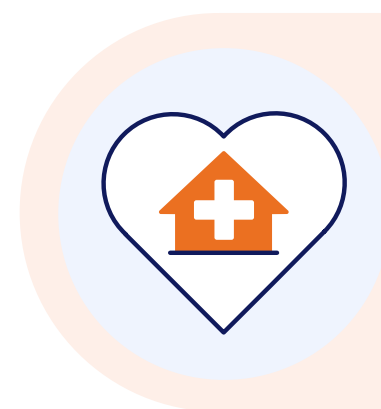
5. Resist the commoditization of our industry
Own our value, gain a true seat at the table

Last but not least: it is high time that our industry casts a loud rallying cry. To build thriving agencies that work for all stakeholders, to propel our industry forward, to deliver on the promise of better patient outcomes, we must trade in those outcomes – not in hours of care.

Home care cannot be pushed down the value chain – which is always a risk when it has long sat in the shadows of acute and primary care, getting scant political or media attention. As we step out of that shadow, we must purge any notion of being a commodity – and advocate from a position of strength based on what clients want, measurable outcomes and a lower cost of care.

It's time to try and solve the problems that have dampened this industry's ability to find a cohesive voice. In our distributed system, agencies are in competition and industry bodies are more fragmented than those of our partners in health care (and, of course, insurers). Lobbying with money is not hard-wired into how agencies tend to think. And assessing home care's value is not so cut-and-dry as it can be in acute care where there can be clearer metrics. For us, it has been harder to quantify "kept at-risk patient from experiencing an unplanned emergent event" while true data that could define the effectiveness of effective home care services are often owned upstream by the payers.

Because of the industry's momentum, the time for change is now. An era of high demand and scarce supply provides an opportunity to set the terms on which we are willing to engage, with managed care organizations, Medicare Advantage Plans, or regional health authorities.

Lobbying a governing body like the CMS is in our purview. (For instance, Medicare gave MCOs the ability to manage home health episodes, and they have started procuring "hours of care" from agencies as a result.) To move the needle, we need a strong national (or global) stakeholders group with the budget and leverage to raise profile and influence change.
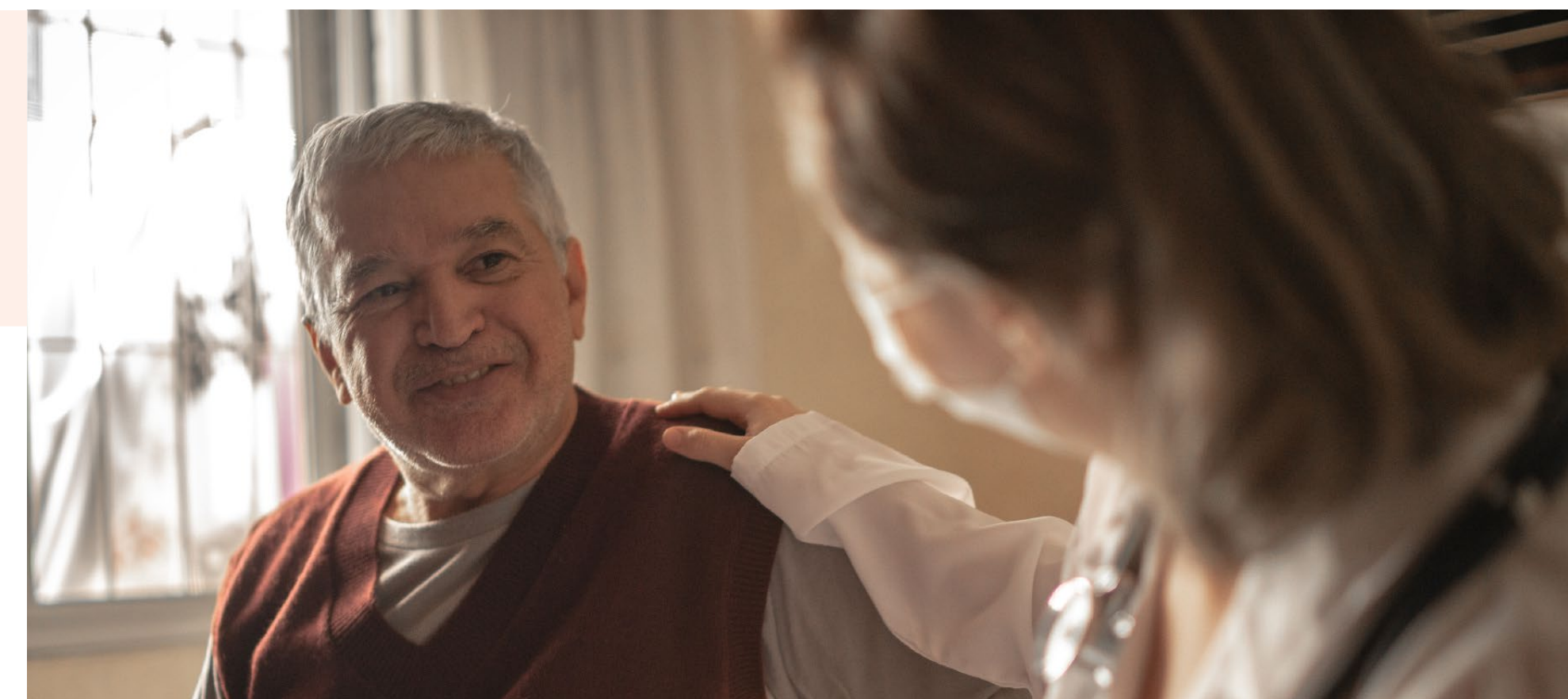
This industry must overcome its fragmentation and own the home care story – and engage with the media and governments to tell that story as broadly as possible.

What's more: agencies must strive to better capture and position the data that proves value. Today, we are in an enviable position with our technology to examine collected data and generate valuable insights – including data to mitigate re-admissions. To this end, agencies must own care delivery for clients in the regions and be better equipped to speak to population health, shared risk. This means finding metrics that are meaningful to funders, showing improved metrics relative to industry standards – and if no metrics are available, we set an assumed standard.

This is how agencies, together, can unlock profit pools by focusing on patient outcomes. The alternative – being continually squeezed as wage rates outpace reimbursement rates – is a road to ruin.

Are you ready to grow your agency?

Against this backdrop for 2023, opportunities will emerge for providers of home and continuing care that could mark success for years to come. It will require outside-the-box thinking, key internal investments, and strategic capitalization on a surging public demand and political need.

As a technology partner that has established itself as a leader in the markets we operate in, we continuously invest in research and development – more than $250M to date – to ensure our platform demonstrates leadership in home-based care. We also recognize our agility to configure our AlayaCare Cloud to serve new markets of home-based care such as infusion, behavioural health and the intellectual and developmental disability (IDD) sector– all supported by our consulting practice.
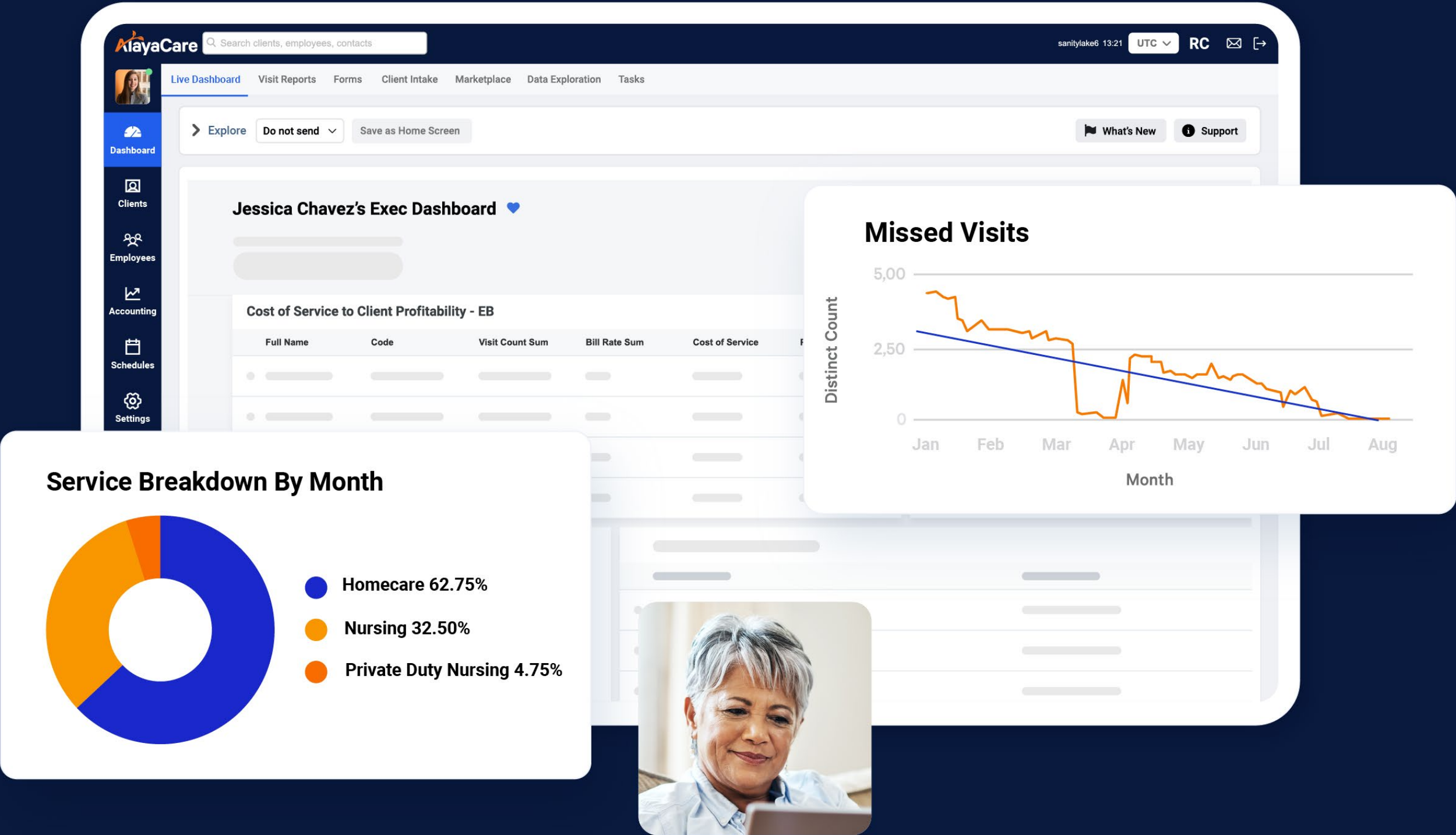
Need more support to ensure 2023 is a success? Discover our AlayaCare Consulting Services and collaborate with your peers through AlayaCommunity and our yearly Better Outcomes conference.

Contact one of our experts today for more details.

alayacare.com/request-a-demo

Alayacare's 2023 home-based care checklist for success

1. Declare war on repetitive tasks by back-office staff

- Catalogue all tasks you deem repetitive inside the back office
- Poll staff as to where they feel their time is spent on administrative tasks that could be automated
- Review your software system to identify tools that could eliminate these tasks and free up staff time
- Contact your software provider for recommendations and tips on how to deploy new tools within the context of your agency's needs.

2. Simplify operations to become part of care delivery

- Assess the amount of time currently spent on communications efforts such as emailing and phone calls.
- How many hours does this take in a day on average? Solicit feedback from family members and others in the circle of care. How are they feeling about the ease and transparency of communication?
- How do you currently manage offers and referrals? Explore how automating and syncing these tasks would streamline your operations.

3. Offer continuous learning and growth opportunities

- Research the most trusted educational platforms specific to home care.
- Review software system to see what educational partners may be integrated.
- Host training opportunities on your secure server for staff at all levels to boost their knowledge, skills, and qualifications.
- Promote these opportunities externally as part of recruitment strategies.
- Analyze what technology you already can access that could make your caregivers' job more efficient and freer from burden.

4. Break convention and seek new funding sources

- Pursue new ways to engage with hospital networks and show them the benefits of partnering with home care organizations.
- How can you seek deeper relationships with the hospitals you currently work with?
- Consider how you could create attractive risk-sharing agreements with key stakeholders.

5. Resist the commoditization of our industry

- Develop a set of cohesive key messages, backed by evidence, that attest to your agency's particular value to clients and to payers.
- Ensure that you capture metrics and data points that speak to the value of your service, which are meaningful to funders.
- Consider what relationships you could strengthen in order to gain a more powerful advocacy voice.
- Strategize what avenues you have to engage with media and government to tell the "home care story" and consider allocating budget toward that end.

AlayaCare

About Alayacare

Alayacare is the proud provider of revolutionary cloud-based home health care software. It is our mission to give care providers the tools they need to achieve better health outcomes by helping to streamline their workflow so that they can focus on what's truly important. With a team of dedicated experts working to change the home health care industry for the better, our clients count on us to offer personalized software and expertise that will result in better outcomes and a stable path into the future.

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