

Report on Research Compliance Volume 19, Number 4. March 24, 2022 With Most MedStar Staff Remaining Off-Campus, Key Is 'Connectedness'

By Theresa Defino

Two years into the pandemic, research compliance officials might be back in the office, at least part time—or spending hours considering their options if that doesn't appeal to them. At MedStar Health, a 10-hospital system in the Washington, D.C.-Maryland area that also includes a research institute, more than a dozen compliance staff under Terrie Estes, vice president and chief compliance officer, went fully remote in spring 2020.

At that time, MedStar, affiliated with Georgetown University, did not even have a remote, or virtual, work policy in place for its 31,000 employees, many of whom, being direct care givers, had to be on-site. Yet many others did not.

Last month Estes reported back from the COVID-19 work front during HCCA's 2022 Washington, D.C., Regional Compliance Conference.^[1] Using a combination of technologies and a philosophy of providing support and staying as connected as possible, the compliance team successfully made the transition to a remote work environment. Now they are facing the question of what's next and which tools and strategies relied upon during the pandemic should be carried forward.

Although she said a decision has not yet been made, Estes expects MedStar to land somewhere between a full return to the office and 100% telework, likely allowing remote work to continue for a few days a week. With this in mind, Estes provided strategies she has used, including tips on managing emails and handling Zoom meetings, to maintaining connectivity with each other and with MedStar.

According to a high-level organizational chart Estes shared during the conference, she has three assistant vice presidents (AVPs): the AVP for hospital and research compliance, the AVP for diversified compliance, and the AVP for compliance operations. Staff include an analytics director, compliance officers for MedStar hospitals and compliance analysts. Estes referred to her colleagues and staff as associates.

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