

**NEW CEILING SYSTEM IS PERFECT PRESCRIPTION FOR PRIVACY  
AT PENNSYLVANIA MEDICAL PRACTICE**

*Combination of High Performance Acoustical Ceiling and Sound Masking System  
Contributes to HIPAA Oral Privacy Compliance*

Oyster Point Family Health Center is a large medical practice located in south central Pennsylvania. Like other healthcare organizations, it has recently taken steps to comply with HIPAA oral privacy regulations. One such step was a ceiling upgrade in the facility's centrally-located nurses station.

Pat Dehoff, Oyster Point's front desk manager, explains that the station is an open area surrounded by exam rooms and offices. "The nurses station is always a very busy area because of all that goes on there," she says. "As a result, it is also an extremely noisy area in terms of conversations, many of which could be heard in nearby treatment areas. Compliance with oral privacy and patient confidentiality was not easy here."

To help remedy the situation, Oyster Point worked in conjunction with Armstrong and installed a new ceiling and sound masking system. The existing ceiling consisted of traditional 2'x 4' fissured panels with an NRC of 0.55 and a CAC of 33. It was replaced with 2'x 2' Armstrong Optima™ Open Plan panels, a high performance acoustical ceiling that features a smooth, fine textured surface, an NRC of 0.85 and an AC of 180.

**Sound Masking System Integrated into Ceiling Plane**

Sound masking is attained through the use of an Armstrong i-ceilings® Sound System designed specifically for small installations. Called TRI-PAK™, the system is ideal for applications in which sound masking is required only in small areas within a much larger space. While the TRI-PAK system can provide music, paging and sound masking, Oyster Point is using it only for masking.

Armstrong PRIVACY™ speaker panels were also used. They work differently than conventional sound masking speakers, which are usually hung in the plenum and bounce the electronic masking sound around the plenum and then back down through the ceiling plane.

The i-ceilings speakers are flat speakers that simply lay in the ceiling grid, radiating sound downward in an omni-directional pattern. Because of this design, they provide wider sound dispersion and more uniform coverage than conventional speakers. In addition, the speakers look just like a standard ceiling panel, so they blend in with the overall ceiling, making the space more aesthetically pleasing.

**New Ceiling Helps Cure Multitude of Privacy Ills**

According to Dehoff, the combination of high performance ceiling and sound masking has had quite an effect. "Now, as you pass the station, you can still hear voices, but you can't always understand what's being said," she says. "The amount of sound carrying into nearby exam rooms is also greatly reduced."

The facility's supervisor of nursing agrees. She notes that prior to the new ceiling, she could hear telephone conversations emanating from the nurses station when she was in an exam room located across the hall. Today, that condition no longer exists.

"The new ceiling has definitely made us more compliant," Dehoff adds.