



Scaling with Confidence

**How Desert Recovery Centers
Built a Compliant, Growth-Ready
Operation with Kipu**

Client:

Desert Recovery Centers

Locations:

**Scottsdale, AZ
Glendale, AZ
Tempe, AZ**



D E S E R T
RECOVERY CENTERS



Building a Foundation for Sustainable Growth

Desert Recovery Centers (DRC) launched with an ambitious goal: to deliver high-quality, compliant behavioral health care in a way that could scale quickly—without compromising on documentation, oversight, or patient care. Just 15 months into operation, they've already achieved what many established facilities spend years pursuing. DRC operates multiple locations, has earned Joint Commission accreditation across all of them, and passed a rigorous audit from United Healthcare with a score well above the threshold.

That success is no accident. It's the result of a leadership team that understands the value of operational excellence—and a technology partner that helped them build the foundation from day one.

"We're the new kid on the block,"

said Ron Alessi, Director of Compliance at DRC.

"But we came out swinging. United Healthcare said, 'Wait, who are you?' They audited us, and we hit the 89th percentile because of how dialed in our documentation was.

That was only possible because of Kipu."

Year Founded:

2022

Number of Locations:

3

Service Area:

**Greater Phoenix
metropolitan area**

Facility Capacity:

**More than 100 beds
across all locations**



Build Fast, Stay Compliant

DRC grew fast. Instead of scrambling to keep up, they used documentation as a launchpad for efficiency, compliance, and confidence.

Compliance Starts with Documentation

Ron speaks from hard-earned experience. Before coming to DRC, he had worked in other facilities and consulted with providers that used a range of EHR platforms.

The contrast, he says, was striking
“I’ve used them all—BestNotes, Methasoft—and none of them come close. With Kipu, the oversight, the alerts, the flexibility... it’s the best.”

From the beginning, DRC knew they wanted to build their care model around structured, efficient documentation practices. That meant finding a system that could support—not dictate—their workflows. According to Ron, Kipu’s biggest differentiator wasn’t just its behavioral health-specific design; it was the ability to tailor the system to their needs without requiring third-party developers or a team of administrators.

“We didn’t want to conform our program to a rigid system,” Ron explained.

“We wanted the system to conform to us.”

A System That Meets You Where You Are

When the right tools are built to flex, your team doesn't just adapt, they thrive

Flexible, Customizable, and Easy to Train

Ron speaks from hard-earned experience. Before coming to DRC, he had worked in other facilities and consulted with providers that used a range of EHR platforms.

That flexibility proved essential as DRC scaled.

"I've customized every form myself,"

Ron shared. **"If the Joint Commission told me mid-survey to add a field, I could do it in real time before they left the room."**

That ability became especially important when DRC was invited to pilot Kipu's new Treatment Episodes module. Ron and his team received sandbox access and quickly tested it across live workflows. Rather than disrupting operations or requiring weeks of training, they introduced it in a single Tuesday staff meeting.

"It took 45 minutes. That was it. From there, we were off and running. And discharge—which used to be a multi-step, error-prone process—is now a one-click task."

Streamlined Workflows from Admission to Discharge

Those kinds of improvements aren't just about saving time, although the impact is measurable. Ron estimates that discharge used to take up to two or three hours per client depending on documentation status. Today, the process is streamlined and tightly aligned with the requirements of both insurers and clinical staff.

Even pre-admission workflows improved. Staff are now able to initiate and organize pre-admission records without entering premature dates or triggering false discharges—something that used to cause friction and extra work.

These early wins laid the groundwork for something bigger: not just smoother operations, but measurable outcomes in the areas that matter most—audit performance, accreditation, and confidence in care delivery.



High Standards, Clear Outcomes

When auditors and accreditors come knocking, DRC doesn't just pass—they set a new bar for what readiness looks like.

UHC Audit: Real-Time Records, Real-Time Approval

DRC's transformation hasn't just benefited operations, it's also had a profound impact on culture. That impact was validated when United Healthcare flagged the organization for audit. Ron, despite never having led an audit before, took the lead.

"They told us the audit would take four months. We passed it in three with an 89% score," he said. **"They'd never worked with a provider who could send medical records that fast."**

That success signaled more than a moment of relief. It validated the team's belief that investing in structure, documentation, and training from day one would allow them to scale with integrity—and without panic.

Joint Commission Accreditation: No Consultants Needed

Soon after, DRC faced a three-day Joint Commission accreditation process across all facilities. With Kipu in place, they received only 12 findings out of a possible 2,000—and corrected 10 of them on site.

"I had my laptop open while the surveyor was still in the room. She asked for a verbiage change in a form. I made the change, took a screenshot, and showed it to her right there. She said, 'You guys are amazing.'"

That kind of agility is what makes a lasting impression on auditors and on internal teams. It reinforces a culture where documentation isn't just a box to check, but a dynamic, responsive tool for continuous improvement. With two major validations behind them, DRC was ready to take on the next phase: building a documentation culture that empowers every role, from intake to discharge.



Technology that Supports a Culture of Care

At DRC, documentation is a cornerstone of care, and everyone plays a role in getting it right.

Documentation as a Reflection of Quality

Documentation is central to DRC's care philosophy. Every shift includes a behavioral health technician note for each client, a case management update, several group notes, and five peer support entries per staff member. Not all of that is billable, but that's not the point.

"We document because it reflects the quality of our care," Ron said. "And Kipu helps us do it without burning people out."

While tools like the "copy" function have made things more efficient for nurses and clinicians, Ron is intentional about how they're used.

"We disabled the copy button for a week, and the nurses begged for it back. It saves them hours. But we train people how to use it responsibly—so we're not duplicating care plans or cutting corners."

That kind of team-wide accountability is what makes DRC's approach to documentation so effective. The system supports the staff and the staff take pride in how they use it. That sense of ownership set the stage for one of the most compelling parts of DRC's story: the personal transformation of the person who now leads that documentation culture.



A Personal Journey from Reentry to Leadership

How a second chance and the right tools turned one staffer into the organization's most trusted operator

Upskilling Through Technology

Ron's personal transformation is central to DRC's story.

"I spent a large part of my life incarcerated," he shared. "When I got out five years ago, I didn't know how to text. I had to catch up with technology fast."

He started out in peer support, documenting shift notes and trying to understand the basics of clinical workflows. Using Kipu's built-in training tools and his own determination, he mastered the system—and eventually became the organization's go-to expert.

"I'm the Super Admin. I train everyone on staff. People call me at 11PM just to ask if I have Kipu open—and I usually do."

That commitment to learning and ownership has made Ron indispensable to the company.

"I left a six-figure job for ethical reasons and took a \$16/hour job with DRC. They took a chance on me, and today, the person who hired me says I'm the most valuable person in the company."

Ron's story reflects more than personal growth; it reflects what's possible when technology meets opportunity. His path from entry-level peer support to system superuser is proof that investing in the right platform can unlock the potential of your people, not just your processes. And at DRC, that potential is being put to work every day in service of something bigger.

Three Lessons from DRC's Rapid Growth

From startup to standout, here's what other behavioral health leaders can learn from DRC's bold, compliance-first approach.



Start early and think long-term.

Ron and the DRC team have consulted with other treatment centers—many of which are still navigating legacy systems and patchwork workflows. Their advice: don't wait for a crisis to invest in the right infrastructure.

"We built to Joint Commission and UHC standards right away," Ron said.

"That way, we weren't scrambling when it mattered."



Designate a champion.

Too many systems fail not because the technology is bad—but because no one owns it.

"Every organization needs a point person," Ron emphasized.

"If you have five people all halfway managing Kipu, it gets messy fast."



Empower your people.

Kipu didn't just help DRC automate or digitize processes—it made staff feel confident and supported. From new clinicians to seasoned supervisors, the system provided structure without rigidity.

"Kipu didn't make us change who we are," said Jason.

"It helped us run better. That's the difference."


Future-Ready and Focused on What Matters

DRC is continuing to grow, with plans to expand their levels of care, increase bed capacity, and further integrate advanced tools like Kipu's Billing Audit Tool. But the foundation they've already built is strong: a culture of compliance, operational efficiency, and team-wide confidence in the care they deliver every day.

The results speak for themselves. Faster audits. Fewer errors. Better staff adoption. And a system that scales as they do.

For Ron and the team, Kipu has been more than a platform: it's been a partner. From customizable forms and intuitive workflows to robust training and audit readiness, Kipu has helped DRC operate at a higher standard across the board.

*"We didn't just get compliant,"
said Ron. "We got better."*



Ready to scale with confidence?

See how Kipu can support your growth.

Schedule a personalized consultation today.