From Chaos to Confidence:

How SMC Recovery Transformed Compliance and Billing with Kipu

Client:
SMC Recovery

Location:
Scottsdale, AZ

Products Used:
Kipu EMR, Kipu Compliance, Billing Audit Tool (BAT), ePrescribe/eRX

Kipu + SMC

Setting the Stage for Transformation

Before adopting Kipu, SMC Recovery struggled under the weight of disorganized paperwork, compliance uncertainty, and billing inefficiencies. Manual processes and fragmented systems made even basic tasks time-consuming and error-prone.

For Christine Stevens, CEO of SMC Recovery, **it felt like operating in "the dark ages— the dark times."**

That changed with the adoption of Kipu's platform. SMC had already implemented Kipu's EMR, but later expanded their use of the platform by adding Kipu Compliance and the Kipu Billing Audit Tool (BAT). By implementing these tools, SMC transitioned from reactive and risky operations to a proactive,

structured, and transparent model. Kipu's tools didn't just digitize their workflow—they taught the team how to manage it better. Real-time compliance indicators, auto-mapped regulations, and billing validations gave the staff confidence and control.

Today, SMC Recovery is audit-ready, with a clean claims rate in the upper 90s and a compliance program so solid even the Joint Commission took notice. Using Kipu didn't just save time for SMC, it preserved focus, allowed staff to do more meaningful work, and improved operational resilience.

This case study explores the transformation in detail, highlighting not just the tools, but the trust, partnership, and measurable impact that make Kipu a standout partner in behavioral health care.

SMC's Challenge

When Christine joined SMC Recovery, the clinic was facing an upcoming Joint Commission audit in just 8 to 10 weeks. With outdated systems and fragmented compliance tracking, the team had no single source of truth, only messy documentation and daily uncertainty.

Christine refers to this period as **"the dark times"** not for dramatic effect, but because operational visibility and structure were virtually nonexistent. Staff were forced to rely on scattered binders, handwritten notes, and institutional knowledge that could disappear the moment someone left. Critical documentation was often incomplete or buried, and leadership couldn't get a real–time snapshot of their compliance standing.

These inefficiencies had a ripple effect on patient care. Administrative burdens siphoned attention away from clients. Staff spent more time managing paperwork than delivering services. The constant fear of non-compliance created stress that trickled down into day–to–day operations, impacting morale and the ability to focus on quality improvement.

With the audit looming, SMC made the decision to move fast and decisively—investing in technology that would centralize their efforts, guide their team, and create a sustainable, repeatable model for compliance going forward. Christine had firsthand experience with other compliance tools on the market and found them all lacking. She found them either too generic, too clunky, or simply not built for the realities of behavioral health operations.

Kipu Compliance stood out for its behavioral health focus and intuitive design. More importantly, it mirrored the logic of real–world inspections, letting users filter by regulatory body and overlay requirements based on the facility's level of care. This meant Christine and her team weren't just tracking compliance—they were actively learning how to manage it better.

"We never would have been ready without Kipu Compliance," Christine says. **"You can't fake preparedness. Either you've got your systems dialed in or you don't."**

Delivering the Kipu Difference

Kipu Compliance: Audit-Ready and Regulation-Smart

Kipu Compliance wasn't just another tool for SMC Recovery, it was a turning point. Christine and her team needed a centralized, intelligent system that could help them move beyond reactive compliance and into proactive readiness. Kipu Compliance delivered exactly that. The platform gave her team a living, breathing view into their standing with Joint Commission, state, and local regulations, all filtered and mapped to their specific level of care.

"It constantly tells me if I'm in 100% compliance or 84%—and exactly what's wrong," Christine explained. **"The Joint Commission loves it because it makes their job easier too. They trust the product, and therefore, they trust the data."**

That level of trust is crucial, especially in an industry where regulatory bodies can vary significantly in how they assess readiness. For SMC, the ability to pull up real-time compliance reports at a moment's notice delivered convenience and peace of mind. The system's overlay feature allowed Christine to toggle between requirements, highlight gaps, and assign action items directly to her team.

Even more compelling, the tool's structure helped train newer staff. Instead of institutional knowledge living inside binders—or inside someone's head—Kipu Compliance became the single source of truth for every facility standard.

"If someone walks out," Christine said, **"someone else can come in behind them and pick it up right away. It's all there—easy to see, not in someone's head or a messy binder."**

What once required hours of cross-referencing statutes, printing checklists, and manually tracking forms were now consolidated and streamlined. Christine also noted that Kipu Compliance helped their team prepare narratives for items that were not in place yet, demonstrating clear intent and accountability during audits.

Kipu Billing Audit Tool (BAT): Accuracy That Pays for Itself

If Kipu Compliance brought clarity to operations, the Billing Audit Tool (BAT) brought precision to the bottom line. Before BAT, SMC's billing process was plagued by inefficiencies like manual double entries, inconsistent payer requirements, and claims that were often rejected on technicalities.

BAT flipped the script by automating checks before claim submissions. With payer-specific rules baked into the system, staff received red-light, yellow-light, and green-light indicators for every claim. Red meant missing data. Yellow meant caution. Green meant ready to submit. That alone slashed error rates and drove first-pass clean claims into the upper 90s.

"Even if I can't quantify it exactly, I know it pays for itself by saving administrative time and preventing mistakes," Christine shared. "It's the difference between chaos and real control."

And the savings weren't just in time. BAT helped capture lost revenue from missed services and documentation errors—cases where an omitted field might have meant a denial.

"If one billable service is missed, and BAT helps you catch it—that one service just paid for the tool."

For SMC, BAT is no longer optional. It's essential infrastructure for maintaining revenue integrity and minimizing the burden on billing teams—especially when teams are stretched thin.

As Christine shared, "BAT turned billing from something we survived into something we mastered."

Real Results

Audit Readiness in 10 Weeks

Christine stood up Kipu Compliance in under three months and successfully passed a Joint Commission audit.

Clean Claims in the Upper 90s

BAT enabled SMC to drastically reduce rejected claims and billing errors.

Time Saved, Trust Earned

Compliance staff no longer spends hours chasing paperwork or deciphering regulations—Kipu Compliance does the heavy lifting.

A Transparent, Continually Improving Partnership

SMC Recovery's partnership with Kipu wasn't without its bumps—but it's precisely this willingness to engage honestly, iterate quickly, and build trust that defined the relationship. From the beginning, Christine made it clear that she didn't want a vendor, she wanted a collaborator. And when the implementation process at SMC hit snags, Kipu didn't retreat or deflect. Instead, they listened.

Christine was candid about the challenges. In her words, **"If we hadn't hired someone who already knew the ins and outs of Kipu, we never would have gotten up and running in time."**

She highlighted a gap in support for medication–assisted treatment (MAT) facilities—a complex care environment with regulatory nuances that differ dramatically from other program types. Rather than ignore the criticism, Kipu elevated it to leadership and began making adjustments.

What stood out to Christine wasn't just the response, but the speed and sincerity of it. Feedback flowed directly to Kipu's Chief Product Officer, and changes were reflected in subsequent releases. From enhancing reporting capabilities to reevaluating implementation strategies for MAT, Christine saw firsthand how her input translated into meaningful improvements.

That responsiveness built trust—and that trust became a cornerstone of the partnership.

As Christine put it, **"Kipu has kept its promise. They do one thing better than anyone else—substance use treatment. And they keep improving. That matters."**

For SMC, that commitment to continual improvement was just as valuable as the technology itself.

By fostering an open dialogue with clients like Christine, Kipu has positioned itself as more than just a platform provider—it's a strategic partner, evolving in lockstep with the needs of behavioral health organizations. **For SMC, that makes all the difference.**

Delivering—and Inspiring—Innovation

What started as a sprint for SMC to prepare for an audit turned into a lasting transformation, built on transparency, collaboration, and solutions tailored to the realities of behavioral health care. The intuitive, regulation-driven design of Kipu Compliance and the automation introduced by BAT helped SMC shift from reactive firefighting to forward-looking strategy.

The implementation of Kipu inspired SMC to rethink what was possible, not just in compliance and billing, but in how technology could elevate the standard of care across the organization. With real-time data and actionable insights at their fingertips, the team began identifying areas for operational improvement they hadn't seen before. The tools didn't just fit into SMC's processes—they pushed those processes to evolve.

Kipu's innovation prompted SMC to do the same. From standardizing workflows to better training new staff, SMC has embraced a mindset of continuous improvement driven by smart, behavioral health-specific technology. It's a new normal for the organization, and one that's grounded in confidence, clarity, and a shared commitment to excellence.

"Kipu Compliance is more than a tool—it's a promise kept. It's become essential to how we deliver care."

As SMC Recovery continues to grow, expand services, and navigate an increasingly complex regulatory environment, they do so with confidence. Backed by Kipu's evolving product suite and a team that listens and adapts, SMC is positioned not just to meet the standards of care—but to raise them.

With Kipu, they're not just compliant, **they're future-ready.**