

Spotlight on...Shorehaven Behavioral Health

Lynn Godec, MSW, is the Executive Director for Shorehaven Behavioral Health, Inc. Lynn is also the Executive Sponsor and Change Team Leader for the Strengthening Treatment Access and Retention-Quality Improvement (STAR-QI) Program. From October, 2013, through September, 2014, Lynn and her change team chose the Admissions Focus Area so that they might concentrate their efforts on Excellence in Customer Service in their clinic, which is located in Brown Deer, Wisconsin, and provides behavioral health services to Milwaukee County residents.

The Admissions goal that Lynn and her change team chose was that Excellence in Customer Service should be the standard of all of their interactions from the first call fielded by the Clinic Support Staff (CSS) to every future interaction with Shorehaven staff. Under Lynn's leadership, the Change Team experimented with a number of customer-focused process improvements utilizing the Network for the Improvement of Addiction Treatment (NIATx) quality improvement model, and the involvement and support of the Wisconsin STAR-QI program.

The first process improvement the Change Team implemented was in response to many clients who utilize public transportation during frigid January Wisconsin winters. The Change Team thought offering a hot beverage and snack upon arrival would be a nice way to welcome clients to the agency. CSS stocked small water bottles, hot chocolate, coffee and snack options, and noted client's responses via a simple tally sheet. The offering of a snack became an immediate way to build a caring relationship. Based on patient feedback that snacks were more desired than beverages, and a therapist suggestion to offer fruit as a snack option, the change team continued to improve their welcoming process. Shorehaven has since adopted this Excellence in Customer Service change based on client comments such as, "Thanks so much, I missed breakfast this morning" and "It has been a long time since I had peanut butter cookies."

A second Excellence in Customer Service change project involved a responsiveness of the agency to the implementation of the Affordable Care Act. Collecting copays/deductibles was difficult with 80% of clients having Medicaid as their funding and many times struggled to pay copays. In addition, therapists and staff also felt uncomfortable asking clients to pay their bills. The change team developed a script that the Clinic Support Services staff would follow with additional steps taken by the billing department to update client files with appropriate financial information. This change has resulted in almost a 100% improvement in the collection of co-pays, co-insurance, deductibles, and private pays.

The third Excellence in Customer Service change project was implemented in response to increasing numbers of clients utilizing electronic devices to communicate. Therefore, Shorehaven leadership wanted to experiment with automating text and e-mail appointment reminders through their Electronic Medical Records (EMR) system. Through a series of rapid cycle process improvements such as rewriting consent forms and having clients update their consent forms, and data entry into the EMR, Shorehaven reduced appointment cancellations by an average of 6% in six short months. The Change Team is continuing to improve this process by addressing with clients those e-mails that bounce back to the system.

In summary, through a commitment to Excellence in Customer Service, Lynn and her change team have improved the Admissions experience for customers by creating a welcoming environment, and adapting appointment reminders to reflect current customer choices. They have also improved their business case so that they can continue to be financially viable in the changing behavioral health delivery system and keep their doors open to provide services to clients who need services.