

Spotlight on...Beacon House

Beacon House is a non-profit organization, located in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, providing residential and outpatient substance abuse services for women. The agency is dedicated to providing compassionate, professional help to women and women with children recovering from alcoholism and/or chemical dependency. Mary Gerlach, Executive Director, is the Strengthening Treatment Access and Retention-Quality Improvement (STAR-QI) Executive Sponsor and Change Team Leader.

During the 2011-2012 STAR-QI Program year, Beacon House chose to participate in the Electronic Health Records (EHR) Focus Area. In past years, STAR-QI providers had experienced the opportunity to apply the NIATx model to other treatment delivery issues such as reducing wait time, reducing no-shows, increasing admissions and increasing continuation. Now providers had the opportunity to apply their knowledge of the NIATx model, to complete a formal search and review effort to narrow down up to three affordable electronic scheduling, billing, charting and database systems that could potentially meet the agency's clinical information and administrative process/data needs.

The Beacon House change team began by asking the question, "What is an electronics record system? The team proceeded with a web search and participated in the monthly STAR-QI Focus Area Provider calls to answer that question. Mary's concern was to find a system that was affordable and could be customized to a small environment which would allow them to continue to deliver excellent service to clients in the manner Beacon House had in the past. During the monthly teleconference calls, Mary had the opportunity to ask EHR questions of fellow STAR-QI peers. Mary shared that it was very helpful to ask implementation questions of Wisconsin STAR-QI colleagues whose opinions she trusted and also represented other small agencies similar to Beacon House.

Utilizing the rapid cycles of the NIATx model and at the suggestion and assistance of the STAR-QI program, Mary and her change team wrote a generic grant proposal to request funding for equipment and software from area philanthropic foundations. Then the team reviewed many EHR vendors, choosing the Celerity system. During the sixth rapid change cycle of their change project, a proposal to purchase Celerity was prepared for the Beacon House Board of Directors. At the end of the contract year, September 2012, the Board of Directors approved the purchase of Celerity, pending receipt of donation funding. Mary and her team continued to submit grant proposals for the funding of implementing their chosen EHR system.

In December 2012, a local manufacturer toured Beacon House asking them what was on their wish list. Beacon House shared their well thought out plan to implement an EHR system and the manufacturer has since provided the funds to implement the system which has an anticipated implementation date of July.