

THE POWER OF QUALITY IMPROVEMENT: ENGAGEMENT FOR IMPROVEMENT

Increasing Retention in Care and Client Engagement through
Active, Community-Based Initiatives

NOVEMBER 19, 2018

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Project Background

Since 2016, the Promesa's Inc. (ACACIA NETWORK) Transitional Care Coordination program has been located at the Casa Maria Community Health Center in the South Bronx.

In prior years, the TCC program experienced difficulty with client enrollment and meeting service targets. However, the move to Casa Maria proved vital to the success of the program.

Our position within the community has helped cement Acacia Network as a standout Community Based Organization (CBO) with exceptional medical care services, accessibility for the unstably housed, and centralized key supportive programs.

Project Background, continued

The leadership of our Community Health Services department recognized early on the importance of a quality client-centered approach to engagement. Programs for individuals who are HIV* positive in the Community Health Services department include: Ryan White Part A-funded (RWPA): Transitional Care Coordination; Early Intervention Services; PrEP for Adolescents; and Care Coordination (a newly funded program).

As common practice, the TCC program has prioritized that all clients experience warmth, care, safety, and privacy as part of their service plans. We believe that this mindset is essential in promoting better HIV health outcomes and retention in care.

Goals

The goal of implementing the 'VIP Lounge' initiative is to increase client engagement and satisfaction, retention in care, and peer support



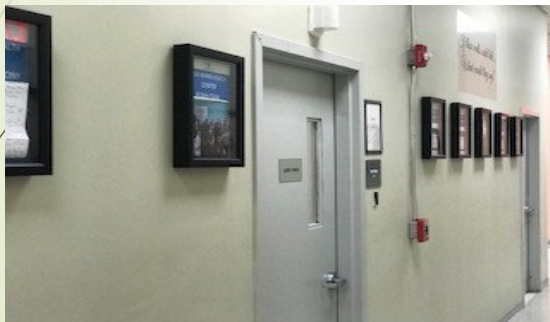
Methods

- A key change at Casa Maria was the development and implementation of our 'VIP Lounge.' A mainstay for our HIV clients, the lounge is modernly furnished and provides important amenities like computer access, a blackboard, smart TV, charging stations, and fresh coffee and tea. Our clients are welcomed every day with a hot cup of coffee, face to face engagement, and health promotions that support healthier lifestyle choices. The lounge has taken on a life of its own providing a haven for peer-to-peer positive guidance, similar to that of the "buddy system".

In the VIP lounge, the TCC program provides extensive client support and counseling centered on Antiretroviral (ART) medication adherence. Program members discuss the importance of adherence for viral load suppression, and the negative impact of substance abuse and medication diversion which can result in increased viral load and decreased CD4 counts. Using survey kiosks, clients can respond to their level of satisfaction every day they come to the clinic.



'If These Walls Could Talk'



'The VIP Lounge'



Results

As a result of 'VIP Lounge' conversations and guidance clients often become 'in-house' peer educators. Peers are able to relay the importance of viral load suppression and how it pertains to the quality of life and survival to newcomers or those struggling with adherence. This unforeseen impact of the lounge has yielded positive reactions from our client community. Unsuppressed clients have become more involved and open to blister packing, with some clients bringing in their packs daily to show staff they are adhering to their medication regimen. This allows for ART medication observation, and on occasion, immediate counseling and intervention. For example, one engaged client improved his viral load from 35,000 to less than 170 units, and CD4 improved from 222 to 418.

When surveyed about the clinic and the 'VIP Lounge,' the clients have expressed great appreciation and satisfaction with its function. Clients often comment on the importance of having a place to go where they won't be "judged or treated unfairly." They enjoy having a support team that respects, guides, and cares for them in the manner they deserve.

Viral Load of one engaged client shows significant improvement



Lessons Learned/Conclusions

- In surveying clients, the Community Health Services team has come up with an additional way for clients to freely express themselves through another initiative called 'If These Walls Could Talk.' Clients are given a pen and pad and are encouraged to write about their experiences with PCP, TCC, and Casa Maria, emphasizing their strengths and hopes for the future. These sentiments are posted throughout the halls and corridors of the clinic effectively giving Casa Maria a voice that welcomes client engagement and retention.

Overall, TCC at Casa Maria has seen an increase in client satisfaction and retention in care through our community engagement initiatives.





Top takeaways for other programs to adapt

- 1- Client Centered Approach
- 2- A location Clients can visit without appointments/walk in
- 3- Activities clients can participate in



About Acacia Network

In the sixties and seventies young, visionary Puerto Rican men and women who were part of the Puerto Rican Diaspora dedicated their lives to creating a better place to live for the Latino New York community. They succeeded in building culturally responsive housing, social service and health care systems that became the foundation for New York State and Acacia Network. We honor our founders by continuing their vision of integrated health and housing programs, and by reinvesting in communities through innovative programming, employment opportunities and affordable housing ownership.

The Network is committed to preserving Latino community based organizations that have been their communities' backbone since the late 1960s.

We have developed a unique model that creates economy of scale while securing these organizations rightful place and identity in the community. Our strength emanates from the contributions of so many past and present Latino leaders. Together with our diverse leadership and staff team our future is bright. Our employees embody the highest degree of dedication rooted in the Acacia values of excellence, commitment, leadership, and customer service. Our professional expertise, positive outcomes, and proven credibility ensure that we continually provide high quality care.

