Using Lean Six Sigma Tools, HHUNY Finds Efficiencies and Reduces Referral Process Time

A health home isn't a place, but an extensive network of services for Medicaid recipients in the community. Health Home Care Managers coordinate and provide access to the services an individual needs to stay healthy and out of the hospital and emergency room. Health Homes of Upstate New York (HHUNY) has about 2000 individuals referred to their health home on average each month. Earlier this year, they utilized lean six sigma tools to identify opportunities for efficiencies in their referral process. As a result, they were able to cut their referral process time in half, helping to make it faster and easier for members to get connected with a Care Manager. CCSI staff sat down with HHUNY's Referral Coordination Supervisor, Tracy Marchese, to learn more about the changes they made.

What was it like using the Lean Six Sigma tools?

"Our team started by mapping out the entire referral process at a very granular level, from beginning to end, including all decision points, "touch points" with anyone outside of HHUNY, and every other action we took, regardless of how small. We then determined the amount of time it takes to complete each of those steps in the referral process. We also identified which steps were under our control and then consolidated them where we thought we could to be more efficient. This work took multiple three-hour meetings, which was challenging for our busy schedules, but we knew it would be worthwhile long-term to streamline our referral process."

What did you learn from using the Lean Six Sigma tools?

"Important member information is sometimes missing with the referrals we receive, so this creates delays to our process as we seek out the missing member information. We therefore learned that we had additional opportunities to be more proactive in educating and training our referral sources about what information is necessary in order for us to find the best care management agency matches for our members.

There are many complexities to member referral, and regulatory changes are happening on a regular basis, so communicating out accurate information is important. We realized that any "touch points" we have with Care Managers, care management agencies (CMAs), managed care plans, and members, are all opportunities for us to provide information around how the system works (or should be working better). Providing education to those that make up the system, results not only in time saved in the referral process, but also in a system that can function more efficiently."

What changes have you made as a result of what you learned?

"For those who make referrals to HHUNY, we've added additional education and training opportunities which review the member information needed for a referral. We've identified which individuals and groups are in need of this additional education and training. New Care Manager Supervisors, for instance, is a group we connect with for one-on-one trainings, providing education and answering any questions they have. We continue to meet with them moving forward on an ongoing basis as needed, so they are sure to get the support they need from us. We also updated our referral form to make sure we are collecting the necessary information we need, recognizing that we still want to keep the form brief.

We've also worked to ensure that the information going out from HHUNY is clear, detailed, accurate, and concise as possible, whether it be in trainings, emails or even one-to-one conversations over the phone. To communicate more consistently, we created communication templates for our staff to use, so regardless of which HHUNY staff member is doing the communicating, the messages and information are the same across the board."

How can I make a referral to HHUNY?

"Visit our [HHUNY website](#) to make a referral. Please call 1-855-613-7659 or email us at askhhuny@hhuny.org with any questions."