

Success Story

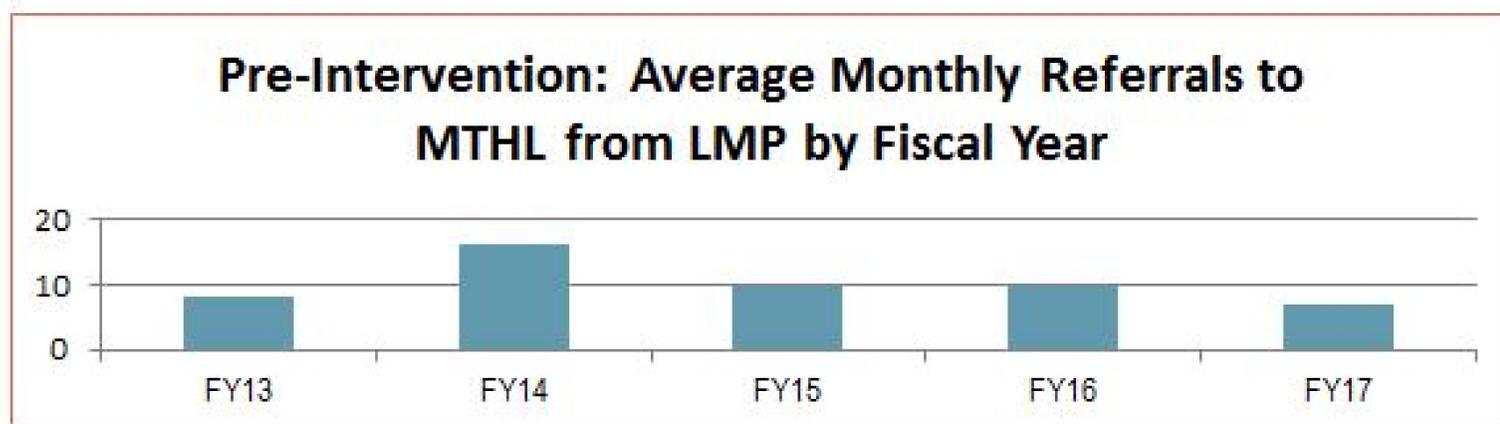
Maine Tobacco HelpLine Referral Form Integrated with LincolnHealth Electronic Medical Record

As a component of funding from the Maine CDC, CTI is often asked to submitted Success Stories related to different topics or grant deliverables. This story was developed in April 2018 as a component of the State Public Health Approaches for Ensuring QuitLine Capacity Grant and has been adapted for this report.



THE ISSUE

LincolnHealth is a full-service health system serving coastal Maine. Its facilities and services include a 25-bed community hospital, an urgent care and wound care hospital, and a multi-specialty physician practice called Lincoln Medical Partners (LMP). Some LMP practices received tobacco training in previous years, covering the rudiments of tobacco addiction, how tobacco treatment medications work, and conducting brief interventions (i.e. “the 5 As”: Ask, Advise, Assess, Assist, Arrange). LincolnHealth implemented an Electronic Medical Record (EMR) in 2012. Four years later the Maine Tobacco HelpLine (MTHL) referral form was embedded in the EMR. This made the offer of a referral a “hard stop” in the workflow: once the patient answers affirmatively for tobacco use, the clinical staff must indicate the referral offer was made in order to proceed through the remainder of the rooming workflow. This is essentially the “Ask, Advise, Connect” model. Additional training was provided to ensure the staff could follow the workflow. This change was expected to have made it easier for providers to connect their patients who use tobacco to evidence-based treatment resulting in more referrals to the MTHL, but that was not the case. Instead, referral activity waxed and waned (see chart below). Further intervention was clearly needed.



Dr. Robert Hunold of LMP Family Medicine Damariscotta and members of his team.

“LMP’s success is largely attributable to the infrastructure Dr. Timothy Goltz and Robin Lozinski have developed. Our practices meet monthly, new initiatives are evaluated and staffed with physician leadership, and both clinical and administrative support. Our success is a team effort, we are fortunate to work alongside an incredibly dedicated staff that truly cares about the quality of care we deliver to our community.”

- Stacey Miller, VP Physician Services

Intervention

In late FY17, the CTI Provider Engagement Team designed a presentation and materials focused exclusively on the MTHL referral process: why it is important to address patients' tobacco use at every visit; how to offer the referral, including effective language to use and information about the MTHL's service and its effectiveness; and how to make a referral using the EMR. This approach puts the needs of the tobacco user patient front and center while training providers to have an effective intervention in as little time as 60 seconds. The biggest difference between this training and previous approaches was the focus on staff's assumptions and feelings of awkwardness talking with patients about quitting, and, very importantly, discussion of how patients benefit from talking about quitting even if they end up declining a referral. The message, in short: "it's not about getting the patient to accept the referral; it is about telling the patient at every visit that you are concerned about their tobacco use, you can help, and you'd like to help."

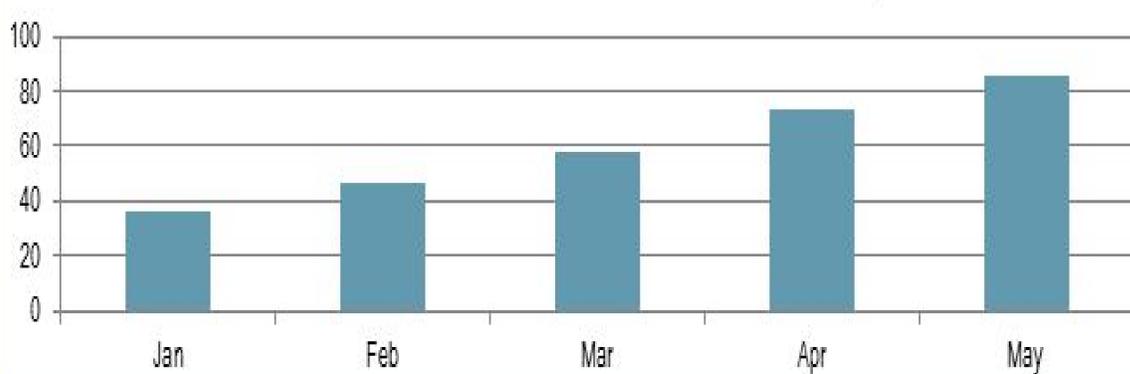
CTI partnered with Robin Lozinski, LMP Quality Manager, to coordinate a total of 6 Provider Engagement sessions in January and early February 2018. Robin had already spent years building a process for quick implementation of quality initiatives so she was successful in getting full participation at these Provider Engagement sessions. The training engaged 8 Primary Care practices, 19 providers and their clinical staff, with a reach of approximately 2,200 tobacco user patients.

Following the Provider Engagement sessions, CTI provided Robin with weekly updates that included the names of providers actively referring and the number of referrals received from each. Robin incorporated this information into quality newsletters and made it a feature of subsequent quality meeting discussions.

Impact

This partnership with LincolnHealth has brought a quick and significant increase in referrals. In each subsequent month, referral activity increased, from the FY17 average of 8 per month to 86 referrals in the month of May 2018. Just in the five months since the intervention began, LMP practices referred 299 tobacco user patients to the MTHL – a 200% increase over referrals for all of FY17. More importantly, 67 patients enrolled in the program and got treatment from January through May – compared to 34 in the entire FY17.

Post-Intervention: Referrals to MTHL from LMP by Month



"Our providers and Medical Assistants have been eager to refer more patients. They know it's important, and they like competition. They are excited to get their referral numbers and see who is doing better."

- Robin Lozinski, Quality Manager