



Quality Home Health Services Goes FISH!

When Quality Home Health Services wanted to improve its teamwork potential, the staff turned to an unlikely source: fish. More specifically, the agency adopted the FISH! Philosophy, a management process based on the story of one Seattle fish market.

How did Quality Home Health Services go from teamwork to FISH!? It started with the administration of the organizational culture survey, provided by Quality Insights of Pennsylvania.

Dawn Catalano, administrator, shared that the agency expected that communication was going to be the area, or culture domain, that would need to be addressed. However, looking at survey results, teamwork ranked lowest, so it was selected as the organizational culture domain for improvement.

“We tried to look at a program that would enhance [teamwork],” Dawn explained. “We held our first meeting in conjunction with the workbook from Quality Insights and came to the conclusion that we focus a lot on treating our patients well... but forget those aspects of internal culture.” The workbooks offered by Quality Insights provide home health agencies with activities and education on improving the culture domains of teamwork, communication, care coordination, and leadership.

Having completed the activities in the teamwork workbook, Dawn and Beth DiGregory, clinical coordinator, began to look at programs they could use to improve teamwork within the agency. They liked the FISH! program because it relates “very well to how health care professionals think,” said Dawn. “The concepts lend themselves



Participants of the FISH! program

very well to the personality of the typical health care worker.”

FISH! focuses on four major principles: Be There, Play, Make Their Day, and Choose Your Attitude. These principles were then related to home care. “Incorporating play into your work; taking the time to make each other’s day, as we do for our patients; choosing your attitude and how that can make a difference in your day, realizing how that carries over into patient

Continued on page 5

HHQI Champions, continued from page 3

hospitalizations. These home health leaders were represented at the HHQI Summit at the CMS headquarters in Baltimore on January 11. Following are a few of their comments:

“It is time for home health to shine.” - Mary St. Pierre, Vice President for Regulatory Affairs for the National Association for Home Care & Hospice

“Home health care agencies are not the problem – they are a solution to many health care problems.” - Bob Wardwell, Vice President, Regulatory and Public Affairs for The Visiting Nurses Association of America

“This campaign will highlight our role as an industry to save Medicare dollars while driving great outcomes.” - Lisa

Remington, Publisher of *The Remington Report*

“All Americans benefit when government and business come together like this to deal with the national health care challenges, and certainly, the home health care industry is stepping up to the plate – like we always do.” - Susan Sender, Vice President and Chief Nursing Executive for Gentiva Health Services. 🐟

Goes FISH!, continued from page 4

care,” are all important, Dawn explained. “If we focus more on the internal environment here, and if we all feel better about things and better about ourselves, that will ultimately affect our patients.”

Despite the fact that FISH! is not a typical program for health care workers, the agency has had success with the program. “When we did start taking off with it, the staff immediately [accepted it],” Beth shared. “It was a fun way to initiate a new program within the agency. The whole culture environment is something different for home care in general.”

“One of our nurses had actually been to that fish market, so it was well received,” Dawn added. “We did colorful things in the office – our room looked brighter.”

Creating a more inviting atmosphere was just one step in this team building process. Dawn said the staff was asked what they wanted to focus on, and they selected Play. “We’re not together a lot... and often it’s a very serious atmosphere focusing on a whole different thing, so they chose Play, which led us to the tree decorating project.”

The tree decorating project revolved around decorating a tree with fish-themed ornaments. All staff, including therapists and home health aides, were invited to attend a decorating party. Even the parent corporation, Viaquest,

got involved. Holly Thompson, vice president of operations at Viaquest, traveled from Columbus, Ohio to attend the Pittsburgh event. Prizes were awarded for the most creative decorations and for the person who showed the best overall participation. The participation award went to a home health aide who created a bulletin board, in conjunction with the tree, which was decorated with fish labeled with each agency staff member’s name.

The agency even purchased a live fish for the office and had a “name the fish” contest on the evening of the tree-decorating event. Staff members suggested names and voted – “Moby” was the winning name.

Donna Anderson, the Quality Insights’ project coordinator assigned to the agency, was invited to attend the party. “Even though it was a celebratory and relaxed atmosphere,” Donna shared, “I was most impressed with hearing the stories of what was going on with the agency’s patients. That was quite inspiring; they truly walk the talk. Beth and Dawn’s leadership is very, very important in what you see here. And having Viaquest’s corporate buy-in makes a difference. I was so inspired.”

Viaquest supplied A FISH! Story video, showcasing the Seattle fish market that began this cultural revolution. The video, which was shown at the party, helped to put the key philosophies of change into focus, and Dawn and

Beth have seen that changing their teamwork philosophy has contributed to enhancing the quality of care for their patients.

“The better our team will feel about themselves, the better they will be, and that will just filter down to our patient care improvement,” Dawn remarked. “We have reduced our [avoidable] acute hospitalization rate by two percent. I see a difference in how the staff perceives that information, too. It’s sort of coming together for them, too, the whole idea of what we’re doing here is all about. We’re taking the time to care about the internal environment and we need to extend that into the external environment.”

“You see an excitement in the nurses,” Beth added. The nurses feel a “more opened avenue for communications, including frustrations or the need for help.” The agency has become a more open environment, which leads to a happier environment. ☺

Learn more about the FISH! program at www.charthouse.com.



Members of the FISH! program