

## Delaware Hospice

**Lorna Hearn**

**Vice President, COO**

3515 Silverside Road

Wilmington, DE 19947

Phone: 302.478.5707

*"We used the Perforum program to improve home health aide utilization, which also resulted in producing positive effects on clinical and financial outcomes."*

*Lorna Hearn, COO*

### Summary

Delaware Hospice was faced with a significant increase in the demand for, and cost of, personal care support through the use of home health aides (HHAs). Despite the fact that financial and personnel resources were stretched to the limit, the staff perceived that, regardless of demonstrated need, having an HHA assigned was a right of the patient. Families were voicing complaints as they were told that an HHA would be assigned, but there was always a delay in filling the request. The aides were frustrated because many families had completed care by the time they arrived for their first visit in the patients' homes.

The agency used the Perforum Integrated Benchmark Program to track the impact of HHA utilization on outcome measures. With the belief that the effective use of HHAs could improve financial outcomes while maintaining or improving quality, the agency implemented a process to identify when aide visits were indicated. They tracked the successful results internally, as well as through the Perforum Quarterly Integrated Benchmark Reports.

### Project Description

In looking at the combination of challenges they were facing, the leaders at Delaware Hospice felt as though the HHAs were not only stretched too thin, but also underutilized. They looked to Perforum to understand how other hospices were working, in terms of operational practices and outcomes performance. With the data provided as part of the Perforum Integrated Benchmark Program, the hospice was able to establish performance goals based on industry benchmarks. Through the Perforum Peer Forum, the agency was able to network with other organizations to better understand how they managed HHA resources, thereby gathering the foundational knowledge to create a plan for achieving their performance goals.

Clinical managers reviewed their HHA use practices, as well as the scope of responsibility of volunteers. Their first effort to improve performance involved developing and piloting a Personal Care Needs Assessment tool that would be used to determine the number of visits needed per week by individual patients.

The Personal Care Needs Assessment was used to meet three goals:

1. Identify those patients who are in need of personal care support
2. Decrease the cost to the agency
3. Maintain or increase patient/family satisfaction

Along with the new assessment, the hospice implemented some changes to their staffing practices. The standard for HHA productivity was raised from 19 to 22 visits per week. The expected visit length for aides was reduced from two hours to one hour that included completing personal care and light housekeeping. This model was sustained with the increased use of patient care volunteers to support the families.

The agency assessed and monitored family satisfaction through two questions from the NHPCO Family Evaluation of Hospice Care (FEHC) survey:

1. How often were the patient's personal care needs—such as bathing, dressing, and changing bedding—taken care of as well as they should have been by the Delaware Hospice team?
2. How confident did you feel about doing what you needed to do in taking care of the patient?

## Project Results

- Average visits per patient week (all patients) decreased from 2.4 to 1.8 visits.
- Average visits per week for patients receiving HHA services decreased from 3.7 to 2.9 visits.
- Cost per HHA visit decreased by 20 percent from \$44 to \$35.
- Family evaluation of the frequency in which personal care needs were taken care of as well as they should have been increased from about 70 percent to about 80 percent (above the NHPCO and Perforum group norms).
- Confidence with the caregiver's ability in doing what they needed to do in taking care of the patient increased slightly (above the NHPCO and Perforum group norms).

## OCS Tools Used to Support the Project

- Perforum Integrated Benchmark Program
  - ✦ Using Perforum Annual and Quarterly Benchmark Reports, Delaware Hospice focused on the following measures:
    - Skill Mix—Percent of Total FTEs by Discipline graph to determine amount of HHA use
    - Direct Cost per Admission graph used to determine amount being spent compared to peers
    - Average Visits per Patient Week graph to identify/establish a norm
    - Average Cost per Visit Per Discipline graph to demonstrate performance compared to peers
    - Personal Care Needs graph to measure outcomes/satisfaction
    - Confidence in Doing What Was Needed graph to measure outcomes/satisfaction
  - ✦ Perforum Peer Forum
- Networking with similar organizations to identify superior practices

## Processes Defined and Implemented

- Identify an agency need or problem
- Look for resources to understand the performance of peers
- Set performance goals
- Identify best practices by learning from other organizations
- Implement changes
  - ✦ Revise patient-need assessments
  - ✦ Modify staffing practices
  - ✦ Re-evaluate the use of volunteer resources
- Monitor progress through outcomes and family satisfaction measures