



Community Health Care Services Foundation, Inc.

*the premier educational resource
for home care and hospice*

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- **Customer service is key**
- **CHC/HCP heading for Montreal!**

By Gayle Farman

Many home care agencies across New York have sought support from State Legislators for local projects in their service areas. These “Member Initiatives” or Member Items undergo careful scrutiny by the legislators receiving such requests, and are an option for agencies that need funding for a new project, to purchase equipment or for ongoing operational expenses.

HomeCare & Hospice of Olean operates in four Western New York counties and requested Member Initiative dollars in the 2007-08 State Budget from three State Senators and three Assembly members for their “Point of Care Project.” All six agreed to fund the initiative to implement an electronic medical record system in their service area. The agency received approximately \$75,000 to assist with the purchase of software, software license, initial purchase of 25 laptops and training. Total cost of the project was \$145,000.

According to Kelly Dickerson, Communications, Information and Marketing Director at HomeCare & Hospice, the Point of Care Project has allowed the agency to take its information technology system to the next step by giving the clinician a tablet (laptop) where all clinical documentation is integrated with patient scheduling, registration, and billing. In addition, clinicians on-call have all the data at their fingertips. Records can be synchronized over a wireless system so that they are updated at the time of clinical entry. Senior clinicians supported the initiative, and the agency involved nursing, social work and spiritual care as “super users.” This buy-in, combined with a carefully designed work plan, enabled all clinicians in four counties to implement the new electronic medical record system in less than a year from the start of funding.

Hospice of Orange & Sullivan Counties has received Member Initiative funding for a number of years. According to Kathi Webber, Vice President of Marketing & Fund Development, “the agency requests funding for additional operational items needed that it cannot support through the existing budget.” In 2007-08, the agency received funding from their local legislators for a new video surveillance system and a back up-generator for phones. Both of these enhanced patient quality of care by improving safety and access. The agency also received support for new laptops for nurses. “While legislators don’t always provide the full funding requested, they value the services provided and respond with some level of support,” Webber commented.

The HomeCare & Hospice project began as part of the Board of Directors’ Strategic Plan, Dickerson said. “The Board made the Point of Care Project a priority, and the agency tailored each request to the population and services in

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Agencies have put ‘Member Initiatives’ to good use

Member initiatives. . .

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that legislator’s district,” she explained. The budget was fully developed before they approached legislators, and the agency notified each legislator that they were pursuing other foundation monies and had committed its own matching dollars.

“Once the project was fully implemented, press events were held to thank the legislator in each district. The project was a win-win for HomeCare & Hospice and the constituents in the legislators’ districts,” concluded Dickerson.

Tips for seeking member initiatives

- Cultivate your relationships with your State Legislators. Invite them to do home visits, meet with them regularly about your services, and attend community events where they will attend.
- Prioritize your project and customize the outcomes specifically to the service district of the legislator.
- Be ready to send formal proposals to each legislator with the specifics of need, cost and impact.
- Where possible, pursue other funding through local foundation grants, and be able to demonstrate matching monies from your agency’s budget. Be prepared to demonstrate that you can sustain the project beyond the funding period.
- Submit your request early to give the legislator time to evaluate your request. Let your legislator know of your request long before the Executive Budget is released.
- If successful, let legislators know how grateful you are for the award. Plan photo ops and press events in each community. Post the project on your agency’s Web site.

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Presented by

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CHC is a non-profit 501(3)(c) affiliate organization of the New York State Association of Health Care Providers, Inc. (HCP).

Visit www.chcforum.org/prepare to view these video-streaming programs, or to download the audio mp3 files and workbooks.

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It's service that will separate the best from the rest

By Louis Feuer

Louis Feuer, one of the home care industry's leading experts on customer service and a renowned speaker and consultant, served as faculty for a CHC webinar in April on "Customer Service Strategies That Will Separate You From the Competition." Focus asked Feuer to summarize his current thinking on customer service in home care.



With the many changes in the health care industry and the continual improvement in the quality of all services provided, the major distinguishing factor among companies will be in the service they provide. Professional customers continue to look for ways to separate one firm from another and the

easiest is to judge them by the service they provide. Unfortunately, too many organizations are unaware of the quality of service they provide. They often live in glass houses and have determined that if no one is complaining, then all must be well.

Keep in mind that most people who are upset with a business say nothing to the owners or to management. They are more apt to tell their professional associates or their friends. If they do complain, it will be in a manner much more destructive to the organization that you could ever have realized. Their brief hostile conversations about your home care agency while they are attending conferences, meetings or seminars can become a destructive force because you're dealing with an enemy you may not be aware of.

How can you begin to solve some of these potential problems? Begin by developing a series of focus sessions with your customers. Invite four or five of your good customers to a meeting, lunch or dessert in your office to discuss what they like about your services, why do they keep calling and what are the reasons they continue to provide you business? Learn what they like most and what you should be doing for every customer. Make sure you allow time for them to contribute their ideas about what would make your company more efficient. What is it they would like you to do that you are not now doing?

What these short meetings are also allowing you to do, is to develop more positive rapport with your customers. When customers have the urge to complain, you want them to be calling you first. Not calling the doctor, the payer or telling all of their friends in the industry. You want to be the first to hear the bad news. You also want to correct it before it is continually repeated and embellished to the point where you appear to have created an ever bigger sin.

When the meeting is over, or any meeting with a client has taken place, take a moment and write them a thank you note. Let them know you appreciate their time and effort in sharing information with you and in improving the quality of your operation. Once the client becomes a part of your "company training program" you will have created a new business relationship that will have many long-term rewards.

Very often it is the customer care you provide that wins you the business! Determining the quality of your clinical skills has always been a challenge for all those in the industry, but good service is one we all have come to appreciate. Bad service is like a dark cloud over any organization and you need to make every effort to keep the sun shining! The aggressive competition should be keeping you on your toes and picking up those telephones even faster. Your customers provide you little time to correct a situation or even a second chance. Take customer service seriously, before you are looking for those you were proud to have, but are no longer on your customer list.

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Upcoming educational events

Fingerprint Training

20 sessions across New York State in 2008. Half-day onsite seminars: "Nuts & Bolts of CHRC" and hands-on fingerprint training.

2008 PPS Survival: ICD-9-CM Code Tips to Ensure Accuracy

May 14

Webinar featuring Patricia Tulloch, RN, of RBC Limited.

Home Care Management Institute

June 4 & 5, 2008

Crowne Plaza JFK
Jamaica, NY

Everything you need to know about running a licensed home care agency.

Forum #37: Corporate Compliance

July 17, 2008

3 pm to 4 pm

Audio conference featuring Lori Tolento of The Solutions Group.

HCP Annual Conference & Exhibition

October 26-29, 2008

Montreal, Canada

"Passport to Home Care" features top home care experts, innovative solutions and networking opportunities.

To register for an event, visit www.chcforum.org/seminars or call 518/463-1167, ext. 817.



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CHC/HCP heading for Montreal!

This year's HCP Annual Conference & Exhibition will be held in the exciting city of Montreal—"Passport to Home Care" will take place Sunday, October 26 through Wednesday, October 29. A conference held outside the U.S. is a first for HCP and CHC; the HCP Annual Conference has always rotated around New York.

"The HCP Board of Directors decided this was a good time to try something different," said Allison Manny, HCP/CHC Director of Development & Education. "And that's bring the Conference to a glamorous, foreign city that is an attraction in itself and still have the strong education component that the Conference has always been known for."

This year's Conference is expanded from three days to four with the addition of a Private Pay track that incorporates the HCP Private Pay Conference that has been held as a separate event in the spring for the past two years. Manny has already made a couple of trips to Montreal in preparation for the Conference and notes the city is "very romantic and very French but everyone who works there speaks English so the members should have an easy, fun time. By starting the Conference on Sunday evening, we're allowing for members who would like to come up early, bring their families or special guest along and have a great mini vacation in Montreal prior to or after the Conference."

Despite recent changes in U.S. passport regulations, a passport will not be required for Conference visitors who travel by land—for them a driver's license and birth certificate will do (or a passport instead of the other two documents.) Visitors traveling by air will need a passport.

The Conference Brochure will be distributed far and wide in mid-May and is also available at the HCP Web site: www.nyshcp.org/expo. Onsite registration for attendees, exhibitors and sponsors is available there as well.

"With the Montreal location," Manny added, "we're expecting to attract attendees and exhibitors from New England as well as New York and we'll have some contact with Canadian home care people as well. It's going to be a great time!"



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