



Affinity
HEALTH SYSTEM

2005
CASE STUDY

Institute for
Healthcare Communication

PROGRAM
PARTNER
AWARD



As healthcare continues to become more specialized, it is critical that caregivers from all disciplines work together and communicate effectively.

In recognition of its outstanding commitment to improving clinician-patient communication, Affinity Health System of Menasha, Wisconsin, has received the Institute for Healthcare Communication Program Partner Award for 2005

Service excellence is rooted in Affinity Health System's mission and values and is a strategic goal of the organization. The organization is committed to implementing training programs that encompass all physicians, leadership/management, employees and volunteers.

Training with the Institute began in the fall of 2002 with a commitment to send four individuals for "Clinician Patient Communication" (CPC) faculty training. Three years later, 95 percent of Affinity's physicians and mid-level clinicians (e.g. physician assistants, nurse practitioners, etc.) have completed the 4.5-hour CPC workshop training. Affinity has selected six of their physicians to become their first CPC coaches.

Four Affinity staff completed faculty training for "Treating Patients with C.A.R.E." in 2004. They went on to train 41 percent of their more than 4,100 employees during the next year, including all clinic and ambulatory staff.

Affinity's model for training employees is unique. First, trained Institute faculty teach the four-hour "Treating Patients with C.A.R.E." course to key Affinity staff. Then, in a decentralized manner, Affinity managers and supervisors teach the four individual modules at department meetings. Service Excellence implementation plans for the department are discussed in addition to content.

Research is being conducted on this model, and Affinity's goal is to have 85 percent of its employees complete the training program by the end of 2006. The Affinity Training and Development department was instrumental in developing a tracking system for all physicians and employees.

Affinity has begun training all managers and supervisors in "Coaching for Impressive C.A.R.E." Initially, two individuals were trained as faculty to continue to teach classes in that module to managers on site. Recently, an additional seven Affinity staff were trained as faculty to assist in continuing the organization's commitment to service excellence.

"Affinity is placing a rising emphasis on service excellence – it is what will ultimately set us apart from the competition. It's what our patients expect, it's what they deserve, and it's what will keep them coming back to Affinity Health System for their healthcare needs," says Kevin Nolan, president and CEO at Affinity Health System.

Affinity Health System is charting the course that leads to a service-minded, system-wide culture of excellence. "Above all else, we will, as a unified culture, treat others with C.A.R.E. While the environment may change, the way we treat others will not waver," says Scott Nygaard, MD, chief medical officer at Affinity Health System.

ABOUT AFFINITY

Affinity Health System is a Catholic mission-oriented regional healthcare network. It is a partnership of Ministry Health Care of Milwaukee, Wis., and Wheaton Franciscan System of Wheaton, Ill. Affinity Health System is the third largest employer in Wisconsin's Fox Valley (Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce & Industry) and ranked 27th among the top 100 integrated healthcare networks nationwide (Verispan 2005).

Affinity Health System is dedicated to serving the healthcare needs of the Fox Valley and Oshkosh communities, through a full range of primary and specialty care services, including family and internal medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics, neonatal intensive care, cancer care, orthopaedics, cardiac care and intensive care.

Affinity offers three Centers of Excellence in health services: Women & Families, Heart & Lung and Cancer Care. The Centers of Excellence, comprised of physician teams and specially trained medical personnel, are committed to promoting patient health in these key areas through innovative treatment, patient education, and caring for the spirit as well as the body.

Affinity Health System and the University of Wisconsin have formed a partnership to provide advanced care to children and cancer patients. The Affinity/UW Children's Health Center offers a comprehensive and highly specialized pediatric service, and Affinity's partnership with the University of Wisconsin Comprehensive Cancer Center brings leading-edge treatment options and a network of nationally recognized cancer specialists to the Fox Valley and Oshkosh communities.

Members of Affinity include Mercy Medical Center and Mercy Health Foundation, Oshkosh; Franciscan Care & Rehabilitation Center, St. Elizabeth Hospital and the St. Elizabeth Hospital Community Foundation, Appleton; Affinity Medical Group, a regional network of 18 family medicine and specialty clinics in 12 communities; Calumet Medical Center, Chilton; Network Health Plan, Menasha; Affinity Occupational Health; and Affinity Visiting Nurses.

AFFINITY'S SERVICE EXCELLENCE VISION STATEMENT

Guided by the mission, vision and values of Affinity Health System, our service excellence vision is to manage the experience and exceed the expectations of all patients, customers and staff, through genuine, personalized, high quality service.

AN ORGANIZATION THAT C.A.R.E.s

With the Institute's permission, Affinity has adopted the Institute's acronym "C.A.R.E." as the name for its overall service excellence initiative. Communicating the system-wide goal of C.A.R.E. has been the task of Affinity's Service Excellence Identity and Communications team.

The team feels this simple word epitomizes the system's mission, vision and values. It is used to guide each employee and volunteer along the customer service excellence journey.

CONNECT: Make a personal connection to the patient and family.

APPRECIATE: Listen, understand and acknowledge each patient's situation.

RESPOND: Anticipate the patient's needs and communicate in a clear, positive manner.

EMPOWER: Inspire patients to have confidence in their ability to contribute to their healthcare.

About the Institute for Healthcare Communication

The Institute for Healthcare Communication was organized in 1987 to enhance the quality of healthcare by improving communication between clinician and patient. Nationally accredited, the Institute has partnered with hundreds of healthcare organizations throughout North America. The Institute's flagship workshop, Clinician-Patient Communication to Enhance Health Outcomes, has trained more than 100,000 clinicians in the "4Es" of communication (Engage, Empathize, Educate, Enlist).

About the Program Partner Award

The Institute launched its Program Partner Award in 1999. The award recognizes partners who have made an extraordinary effort to address the issue of clinician-patient communication within their organizations. Recipients of the award include:

- 1999 Veterans Health Administration – Department of Veterans Affairs
- 2000 Permanente Medical Group
- 2001 Geisinger Health System
- 2002 Physicians' Reciprocal Insurers
- 2003 American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons
- 2004 COPIC Insurance Company
- 2005 Affinity Health System



Dedicated to improving communication between clinicians and patients.