Strengthening Physician Relationships and Building a Referral Network

Delta Region Community Health System Development (DRCHSD) Program Communication Strategies for Community Outreach and Education
Delta Region Community Health System Development (DRCHSD) Program

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Poll Question:

• I am ___ in my understanding of how to increase the volumes of my primary care team.

• I am ___ in my understanding of how to seek new revenue opportunities and expand my organization’s service area by expanding outpatient services.

• I am ___ in my understanding of how to establish and build relationships with referral sources including providers, discharge planners, case managers, and others.
WHY FOCUS ON Strengthening Provider Relationships?

Strong provider relationships can translate into:

- Increased referrals and volume
- Expansion of service lines
- New revenue opportunities
- More efficient utilization of resources
- Improved recruitment and retention
PHYSICIAN PREFERENCES for Hospital Partners

Of those providers who indicated their organization has a preferred hospital partner, 46% said:

**More than 70% of their referrals go to their top hospital partner(s)**

Strong provider relationships lead to more referrals and increased revenue.

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HOW DO YOU
Strengthen Provider Relationships
and Build Referrals?
START WITH Strategy
Q: What is the most important preliminary step in the strategic planning process?

HINT: Many rural hospitals neglect this step, which often results in:
- Over-spending
- Underperforming marketing campaigns
- Missing new opportunities to grow volume
- Reduced or negative ROI
In order to be effective, a marketing strategy needs to be firmly rooted in INFORMATION-BASED PLANNING.
Information-Based Planning

Gain necessary insights to make strategic operational and marketing decisions

• **Data-Driven Market Analysis**
  Forecast changes in patient utilization in order to prioritize service line growth

• **Competitive Analysis**
  Gain insights on competition, differentiators, performance, new revenue opportunities, etc.
ESTABLISH Prioritizes

Rank top 3 areas of importance

• Referrals
• Primary care
• Immediate profitability
• Downstream revenue
• Market share potential
• Differentiation
• Competitive pressures
• Capacity/access
• Self-referral/direct access
• Patient experience
• Your reputation
• Image/community goodwill/community needs
• Market ready and marketability
Service Line Prioritization

**Tier 1**
- 60%
- Specialty areas to communicate now

**Tier 2**
- 30%
- Services that will make a significant impact of your organization’s bottom line

**Tier 3**
- 10%
- Areas of opportunity for the future

ALIGN YOUR DECISIONS WITH YOUR STRATEGIC PLAN
Set Goals and Develop a Communications Plan

• Align communications plan with a strong strategic plan
• Set specific, measurable goals
• Develop strategies and tactics to reach goals

EXAMPLE:
Increase primary care volume by X%.

Generate new revenue by offering pain management services.

Increase referrals by X%.
TECHNIQUES to Increase Primary Care Volumes
INCREASE Primary Care Volumes

• **Maintain consistent outreach**
  - Targeted message via social and digital media
  - Print communications sent to homes
  - Text messages and email reminders

• **Encourage and respond to online reviews**
  - 89% of consumers read organizations’ responses
  - 56% say organizations’ responses have changed their perspective on the business
INCREASE
Primary Care Volumes (continued)

- Offer extended, patient-centered hours
- Telemedicine
  - Supplement extended hours for better access
  - Chronic care management (CCM)
  - Wellness visits and preventative care
INCREASE Primary Care Volumes (further)

• **Offer online scheduling**
  The ideal digital workflow includes:
  • Appointment reminders
  • Pre-visit instructions
  • Electronic intake forms
  • Patient education
  • Surveys
  • Offer other message touchpoints such as text messaging
INCREASE Primary Care Volumes (once more)

- Preventative Care and Chronic Care Management follow-up
  - Schedule patients for next visit before leaving appointment
  - Reach out to patients who have not received care within the past 12 months
  - Work with health information technology staff to identify how patient contacts will be captured in the EHR
INCREASE Primary Care Volumes (furthermore)

• Identify unassigned patients:
  • Work with ED and discharge team to have them refer patients without a PCP
  • Identify PCPs who are accepting new patients on your hospital’s website, on payer websites, etc.
INCREASE Primary Care Volumes (final)

- Build out your website and patient portal
  - Remind patients of their appointments via the Patient Portal
  - Optimize your “Health Maintenance” applications of your EHR

- Leverage storytelling
  - Video
  - Digital communications
  - Print
TECHNIQUES
to Build Relationships, Referrals and Revenue
BUILD Relationships, Referrals and Revenue

- Appoint an “owner” of provider relationships
  - Educates/updates providers about your services
  - Onboarding providers
  - Physician satisfaction survey
• **Think outside of the box**
  • Identify potential tertiary and regional partners that can help your hospital meet identified business goals
  • Explore a cooperative approach between “competitors” to expand services, maximize resources, build referrals, etc. without losing your (or their) competitive edge
• Build relationships with referral sources including discharge planners, case managers and others:
  • Round on local nursing homes and public health staff
  • Create a network of local case managers/discharge planners
  • Share your programming with other facilities – take your information to them
TECHNIQUES to Overcome Challenges to Expand Service Lines

Bold thinking and strategic planning can help rural hospitals overcome challenges and meet goals.
COMMON CHALLENGES Around Adding Service Lines

- Lower patient volume due to smaller population
- Provider shortages
- Competition for referrals
- Financial viability challenges related to adding new service lines
About Barrett Hospital & HealthCare

- Critical access hospital (CAH)
- Located in Dillon, Montana
- Founded in 1922
- 18 beds

- Nearly 260 employees
- Newly constructed facility opened in 2012
ALIGN
Your Marketing Plan with your Strategic Plan

• Barrett Hospital & HealthCare’s strategic plan identified two new service opportunities
  • Non-surgical pain management
  • Vein care
• Service line prioritization ranked both services as Tier 1 opportunities
Leveraging New Opportunities. Overcoming Challenges.

Pain Management Services

- **OPPORTUNITY**: Growing need for local pain management services

- **CHALLENGE**: Population in Dillon could not support adding a specialist in pain management

- **BOLD THINKING**: A regional partner could help fill this gap in services
Strategic Solution: **COOPETITION**

Hospital leadership took an unconventional approach to transform a challenge into an opportunity.

**Competition + Collaboration = Coopetition**
Coopetition = Win/Win

Mutually beneficial arrangement

• Allowed BHHC and its tertiary and regional partners to provide greater access to maximize resources and efficiencies
• Provided new revenue streams for BHHC
Pain Management Services

• After multiple conversations with potential providers, BHHC contracted with a regional partner to offer a non-surgical pain management program
OVERALL RESULTS

Coopetition resulted in:

- New revenue stream for BHHC by adding pain management services
- Expanded referral network
- Increased patient volume
- Maximized resources and efficiencies
Pain Management

- Traditional advertising
- Paid digital advertising
- Social media
- Referral communication
- Patient portal messages
Adding Pain Management program not only helped drive direct revenue, it also drove growth in ancillary services.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONTHS</th>
<th>PATIENT VISITS</th>
<th>+90%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOV 2020 (Started practice in Oct 2020)</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAY/JUNE 2021</td>
<td>AVERAGE 76 PER MONTH</td>
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Post poll Question:

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I am ___ in my understanding of how to establish and build relationships with referral sources including providers, discharge planners, case managers, and others.

I am ___ that I will apply the knowledge gained from this educational training to improve my organization’s community outreach and education efforts.
DRCHSD Communication Strategies for Community Outreach and Education Webinar Series
Webinar #5

Professional Development: Elevating the Role of Communications in Your Organization
Thursday, November 18, 11:00-12:00 CT

Speakers:
Mike Milligan, President / Legato Healthcare Marketing
Thank You!

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