

Labor Management Project Case Study

Zucker Hillside Hospital North Shore-Long Island Jewish Health System

Meeting Spiritual Needs in a Mental Health Setting

BACKGROUND

The Zucker Hillside Hospital is a 223-bed psychiatric facility known for its work in diagnosis, treatment and research of mental illness.

In March 2008, the Zucker Hillside North Shore-Long Island (NS-LIJ) Labor-Management Project Committee (LMPC) chose to address “sensitivity to spiritual needs” at the hospital. They recognized how important this would be to their mental health patient population, and their Press Ganey scores in “Spirituality” were low across all units and in relation to similar facilities in the region.

GOAL:

To provide more opportunities for the patients to engage in the spirituality of their choice by offering spiritual services and items requested through a survey given to the patients and family members.



From left to right: Steve Young, counselor & 1199 delegate, Michele McCarthy, Manager of Human Resources; Raymond Thomas, Mental Health Worker & 1199 delegate.



PROCESS:

The committee began addressing the issue by surveying the patients on every unit and asking what their spiritual needs were during their stay. Some patients were reluctant to participate while others responded in a group setting. The LMPC members saw an improvement in their scores early on which they attributed to the “Hawthorne Effect” – meaning the patients felt better about their spiritual needs being met because the staff had asked direct questions about these needs.

“We are really proud of this joint effort. Union and Management were able to share ideas and implement them,” said Karina Norr, former associate executive director of Human Resources at Zucker Hillside. “We were able to do something that improves the patient’s experience when they’re here and it also enables the staff to make a positive impact.”

LESSON LEARNED

The survey data encouraged the committee to reach out to pastoral services offered at their flagship hospital, Long Island Jewish Medical Center. This led to revamping the schedules so Zucker Hillside could be included in the pastoral services rotation.

The group also:

- Solicited materials from organizations in the surrounding neighborhood to better address the needs of their diverse population
- Sent a list of patients’ religion preferences to the resident Rabbi and Catholic Sister so they could organize the delivery of spiritual needs in a more frequent and targeted manner
- Added a Spirituality Resource list to the inpatient admission packet
- Created a spiritual “crash cart,” holding items like breakaway rosary beads, Bibles, Korans, meditations, etc.
- Developed a script to guide staff in getting spiritual information to patients

OUTCOMES/CONCLUSION

The Labor Management Project Committee consistently shared information with staff about available spiritual work and pastoral service. By August 2008, there was a steady improvement in their spiritual needs score showing an increase of 10% from where the project began in March. The group’s work plan includes monitoring this particular score on a monthly basis and continuing to update the spiritual crash cart.

“This project was a good way for us to have input and to impact our patients and ourselves,” said 1199SEIU delegate Ray Thomas. “It’s really nice to be able to give patients what they need when they need it. That’s why the spiritual crash-cart is such a good idea. We are empowered to assist patients in a non-clinical way that is calming.”

By March 2009, the Labor Management Project Committee and staff had increased their Press Ganey “*Sensitive to Spiritual Needs*” score by 2.1 points from 85.1 to 87.2.

