



# IMPROVING THE CARE TRANSITIONS DEPARTMENT

St. Barnabas Hospital



**St. Barnabas Hospital is a 461-bed, not-for-profit acute care community hospital and Level I Trauma Center located in the Bronx, New York. The Labor Management Project helped the hospital improve operations within the Care Transitions Department.**

### The Challenge

Relationships within the Care Transitions department were strained. Miscommunication was frequent, and there was a general sense of frustration. Social workers felt as if they did not have adequate equipment (e.g. computers), workspace, or guidance from management. They also felt that they were getting mixed messages about their discharge work, charged with providing excellent discharge planning and support for patients while at the same time making sure the patients move out as soon as possible. Managers felt that the social workers were resisting the case management system they were supposed to be implementing.



### The Solution

To improve inter- and intra-departmental communications and staff morale, Labor Management Project consultants worked with the hospital to establish a Care Transitions Labor Management Steering Committee that consisted of representatives from both management and frontline staff, including nurses and social workers. The committee addressed communication, staffing, social work supervision, teamwork, HCAHPS scores and availability of computer equipment. It also investigated training programs to provide RNs and social workers with the skills needed to successfully perform discharge planning. Members of the Care Transition staff were surveyed in the fall of 2011 and the summer of 2012 to measure their perceptions of their department's progress.

### The Results

Improvements were made in most of the problem areas addressed by the committee. For instance, the availability of space for the social workers improved, computer software and equipment were updated and staffing was increased on both the nursing and social work sides. The survey showed slight but significant progress on most issues.

