



Wesley Village – Shelton, Connecticut

Planetree Implementation Leads to Significant Changes Greater Staff Retention and Patient Safety Indicators Cut Operational Costs

Owned by the non-profit United Methodist Homes, Wesley Village provides independent, assisted living, and skilled nursing care to more than 600 residents annually. In 2002, each of the three communities on campus (as well as the individual departments within those communities) had high satisfaction scores, strong reputations, and longevity in staffing, but they were all operating in isolation. Resident-directed efforts did occur at the behest of the caring staff, but without the benefit of any deep-rooted systems change, they lacked focus and the ability to sustain those improvements.

Taking the First Step

Wesley Village noted the transformational change occurring at nearby Griffin Hospital in Derby, Connecticut and realized that Planetree concepts were very applicable to long-term care. They also noted the vast potential for improving the patient transition experience by connecting the Planetree philosophy across the continuum of care. To this end, Wesley Village began implementing and testing a set of components based on the Planetree acute care components. Some remained the same, while others were modified to meet the needs of individuals served in continuing care environments.

One of the most important first steps was educating staff on culture change and engaging them in the vision of community-building and relationship-centered care. At a farmhouse in the country, all staff participated in two days of experiential exercises on the aging process, teamwork, relationship-building, as well as their role in the process of implementation. Residents, families, staff, and volunteers became an integral part of the process by setting goals and identifying improvements in each of the ten continuing care components. The goals were then prioritized by a committee comprised of managers, line staff from all departments, residents and family. The goals were posted along with quality improvement indicators to raise awareness and promote transparency of an environment that strives to exceed quality standards.

Taking Action

The community began implementing programs to achieve these goals. In many situations, the results far exceeded expectations and were fueled by the impetus of the line staff. At the nursing home on campus, for example, they began implementing consistent staff assignment and explored other ways to ensure that resident routines and preferences were honored and that those residents determined the pace of care and services. As changes were made to improve flexibility of meal times, for example, a domino effect took place, affecting the rhythms and routines of all departments. At first, it was simply a breakfast buffet for short-term rehabilitation residents to enhance flexibility for waking and rehabilitation times and to provide a separate dining experience from our long-term residents. Staff and residents responded so positively to the changes (the smell and aroma of food, hot toast, expanded choices, fewer call-downs to the kitchen, the bonding of residents with each other and with dietary staff, increased resident consumption of food, and an atmosphere of normalcy), that within 9 months,

every resident benefited from a trayless buffet system during all meals. The administrator notes that, for one pavilion of the nursing home, the shift occurred on a day that she was out of the building, a testament to the decentralization of leadership in the community.

For many staff members, it involved a new way of looking at their jobs, and at excellence in providing services. In the activities department, employees have long been evaluated by how many residents attend a program rather than the active engagement of the residents attending. Through Planetree, the focus has now changed from the quantity of programs and the numbers served to the quality of programs and resident-directed programs that support teaching, mentoring, sharing, and the building of skills and talents. For maintenance and housekeeping departments, an Earth-friendly cleaning program has been implemented with the use of all non-toxic cleaning supplies.

Far-reaching Results

Ultimately, the implementation of Planetree Continuing Care led to enhanced clinical, financial, and operational outcomes as well as increased resident and staff satisfaction. Since implementing Planetree at Wesley Village, staff turnover has remained 40 percent below the industry average. In addition, just two years after implementing the model, the nursing home reported that no certified nursing aides had left due to dissatisfaction with their jobs. Compared to a national average of 70 percent, all turnover was involuntary at a rate of 18 percent. Since 2003, a 42 percent decrease in the amount of CNA turnover has resulted in a savings of more than \$40,000. There has been a 36 percent increase in volunteers since 2003, with the hours volunteers logging at Wesley Village in 2008 valued at \$209,732 (Independent Sector). One quarter of the volunteer corps is comprised of residents (13%) and staff (11%).

At Bishop Wicke Health Center admissions have increased by 42 percent since 2005. Because of the trayless dining and improvements to the dietary system, weekly supplement use has decreased by 70 percent, resulting in a savings of \$26,000 annually. Bishop Wicke accomplished a 90 percent reduction in restraints, a reduction of safety alarms by 50 percent, and the installation of a wanderguard system to allow walking throughout the facility as opposed to a locked pavilion all without an increase in falls. Leaders attribute this improvement to Planetree initiatives including consistent assignment, information and empowerment of residents, the implementation of an incontinence program that minimizes late night wake-ups, and the redesign of an ambulation program to involve the primary caregiver (family member). Significantly, in 2008 there were no falls on the rehab unit on the 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. shift. In addition, agency use decreased by 50 percent from 2007 to 2008.

In the end, Wesley Village realized that transformation is not about implementing a laundry list of programs; instead it is about awakening passion, creating a strong sense of purpose, and engaging everyone in the process of improvement. Through the interactive and supportive environment, caregivers have reawakened their inner passion and remembered what brought them to healthcare in the first place.