

COMMUNICATION TRAINING WORKSHOP

ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To: XXXXXXXXXXXX
Executive Director

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a detailed description and analysis of the Training Workshop which was held on February 23, 2018. The workshop was tailored to fit the needs of the Operations Department for the Services at Home division of XXXXXXXXX and was developed to address the need for improved communication department wide. The department is currently facing declining customer service scores, poor employee retention rates, and rampant non-compliance with Medicaid and state mandates. All of these issues can be improved through better communication.

The purpose of the Training Workshop was to provide office staff with the tools necessary to communicate more clearly and effectively with the caregivers who work in client homes. The key components of the workshop were greeting the caregiver, using empathetic language, being mindful of tone and body language, effectively de-escalating a situation, thorough instruction, and thoughtful closings. These components were chosen because together they work to create more productive conversations which serve to address and correct departmental challenges.

Customer service scores will be improved through ensuring the customer, which is the caregiver in this case, feels that he or she is heard and that the employee is actively working toward a solution. The Training workshop addressed this challenge by focusing on how employees interact with caregivers. The workshop addressed this concept by teaching the in-house employees to be mindful of how others perceive their attitude during an interaction.

Employee retention numbers will be improved through communication by not only utilizing the same skills employed to improve customer service scores, but by going a step further by making the caregiver feel valued. An employee who feels valued is engaged in their work. An engaged employee is more likely to be loyal to their company, which means less employee turnover. The Training Workshop addressed this concept by emphasizing the importance of using empathetic words and ownership language when speaking with a caregiver. Empathetic words show the caregiver that the employee understands the caregiver's position. Ownership language shows the caregiver that the employee is willing to actively work for a solution. Combined, empathetic words and ownership language make the caregiver feel understood, valued, and integral to the organization.

Improved compliance will be achieved through better communication practices. The workshop taught effective education methods in addition to the communication techniques outlined above. Effective instruction is required to ensure a complete understanding of duties and expectations. Without a thorough understanding of all of the responsibilities of their position, a caregiver cannot be expected to comply with the rules and regulations XXXXXXXXX is required to enforce. Teaching the in-house employees how to better educate the caregivers on matters of compliance will, as a result, improve compliance levels.

The observational research method was employed both before and after the workshop was held in order to first identify the key concepts that would be covered, then to determine whether or not the workshop was a success. The interactions that were observed were all between the in-house office employees and the caregivers. The results of these observations showed that although the

workshop was well received, it did not facilitate a significant increase in the positive behaviors associated with improved communication. This is due, in part, to the workshop attendees not being thoroughly engaged with the material as well as a missed opportunity to verify the employee's understanding at the end of the workshop.

In light of this, I recommend we revisit how the content was delivered in the workshop. The role-playing activities should be more inclusive and collaborative to ensure the employees are thoroughly engaging with the material. In addition, there should be more interaction between the speaker and the attendees which will help to maximize understanding and therefore retention of the material. A better understanding of the concepts taught will lead to better application as part of the employee's duties. I also recommend instituting a test at the end of the workshop to verify complete understanding of the topics covered. Once these changes are implemented, I recommend holding the workshop again. After which I would recommend additional observations to determine and monitor that the concepts continue to be implemented as part of regular duties.

INTRODUCTION

As part of my graduate program I have developed a Training Workshop, the purpose of which is to train XXXXXXXX's in-house office employees how to better communicate with our caregivers. One of the biggest areas of opportunity XXXXXXXX faces is the relationship between the in-house office staff and the caregivers who work in the field caring for patients in their homes. These relationships have significant effects on customer service scores, employee retention, and compliance with state and Medicaid guidelines. When the relationships between our office employees and our caregivers are thriving we see happy clients, less inquiries and investigations from state and Medicaid officials, and more importantly we see growth. When these relationships are faltering the company itself falters.

Communication between the two parties is often strained due to key differences between the office staff and the caregivers. These differences include education, skill level, familiarity with technology, and language. XXXXXXXX does not offer formal training in the area of communication for any of its employees and as a result many of the office staff members are not equipped with the tools and the knowledge to bridge these gaps in communication. The Training Workshop was designed to focus on effective communication and customer services concepts such as ownership, empathetic language, body language, tone of voice, and verification of understanding. By focusing the training in these areas, my goal was to give the office staff the tools necessary to better communicate with caregivers. Better communication leads to better understanding and less tense interactions between office employees and caregivers which will result in improved customer service scores, higher employee (including caregiver) retention rates, and better overall compliance with state and Medicaid mandates.

BACKGROUND

The communication breakdown between office employees and caregivers is the result of a wide gap in language, education, and skill level. The language gap stems from a large population of caregivers, roughly 35%, who are Spanish-speaking only, whereas in the Operations Department only seven office employees are English-Spanish bilingual and able to assist our Spanish-speaking caregivers. In addition to language, there is an educational gap that serves to further negatively impact communication. Whereas the office staff are required to have, at minimum, a high school diploma or equivalent, the caregiving population does not have the same requirements. Much of the caregiving population does not possess a high school diploma or equivalent, and many have a junior high education or less. This can present communication issues as education can affect how one person understands another. This difference in skill level also affects communication. There is also a significant difference in skill level as many of our caregivers do not have much experience with technology. It is difficult to teach a caregiver how to use the EVV system without the caregiver having foundational knowledge of technology. Without the office employees having an understanding of how to effectively teach someone with a significantly different level of skill, there is little hope that the caregivers will fully understand the concept and therefore little hope that the caregiver will be compliant.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Training Workshop was to teach the office staff to use effective communication techniques to overcome the difficulties caused by the differences in skill level, education, and language that exists between the office staff and the caregivers. With our caregivers being such an integral and essential part of our business, we must find a way to improve communications. Improved communication will lead to caregivers having a better and more complete understanding of what is expected of them, which will improve productivity because caregivers will spend less time making mistakes that must be corrected or failing to follow instructions completely. Improved communication will also positively impact the department's compliance with Medicaid guidelines and state mandates regarding scheduling restrictions, EVV, and employment records. The techniques and concepts discussed in the workshop were chosen and emphasized because I believe they will lead to improved communication. When communication improves, so will the relationships between the office employees and the caregivers. This will result in increased customer service scores due to improved relationships. It will also lead to higher employee retention rates because caregivers will better appreciate their importance in the organization and will therefore be more likely to feel fulfilled. Finally, it will lead to better compliance because caregivers will have a better understanding of the critical aspects of their job.

DEVELOPING THE WORKSHOP

METHOD

I chose to use observation as my method of researching what key concepts needed to be included in the Training Workshop. I decided to observe a total of ten face-to-face interactions between caregivers and office staff. I planned on two sets of observations. The first observation took place before the workshop. The data from this observation showed me the areas that needed the most improvement and therefore needed to be included in the workshop. The second observation took place the week after the Training Workshop was held. I used the data from that observation to determine whether or not the workshop was successful.

The pre-workshop observations took place over the course of four days. The post-workshop observations took place over the course of three days. The observations were announced by the Executive Director so that all of the office employees were made aware of it, however the exact dates and times of the observations were not announced. This was to minimize any behavior modification that might skew my data collection. As a member of management, part of my regular duties is to walk the floor and observe the staff. Since I regularly do this, the staff would not be able to differentiate the observations from my regular duties which further served to minimize behavior modification. Since I had already become familiar with certain positive and negative behavior patterns as part of my managerial duties, I used that knowledge and experience to identify the behaviors I expected to observe.

The Operations Department is located in the middle of a large, open office space with the workstations divided up by low-walled cubicles. This was helpful to me as I did my observations because it allowed me to walk through the department and observe at enough of a distance where

I could still hear the interaction but was unobtrusive. This also allowed me to be selective about which interaction to observe and document.

My goal was to get a broad overview of how the department communicates, instructs, and relates to the caregivers. I used a single checklist as part of the observations in order to ensure complete anonymity and avoid any chance that any of the interactions could be identifiable. Once the observations were complete I tallied up the totals and analyzed the results to see which areas required the most attention as part of the Training Workshop. I chose to highlight specific behaviors – some positive and some negative – that belonged to five categories. Those categories were: Greetings, Customer Service, De-Escalations, Training and Resolution. I chose these categories because of their connection to the greater topic of communication.

Communication is at the root of all the customer service, employee retention, and compliance challenges faced by the Operations Department. XXXXXXXX measures customer service scores through two different anonymous surveys. One of the surveys is a telephone survey that is conducted by a third party which contacts XXXXXXXX clients to ask about the quality of their overall experience with XXXXXXXX as well as the care they receive from their caregivers. The other survey is done in-house with survey forms that caregivers can fill out regarding the quality of service they received from our office employees. The latter is where XXXXXXXX obtains the metrics that tell us how the office employees are being received by the caregivers. These customer service scores have been consistently dropping in the last year and this can be related back to communication. Effective communication techniques lead to fewer miscommunications, fewer tense interactions that lead to escalation, and fewer caregivers who feel unheard and undervalued by the office staff.

Happy, valued, and understood caregivers lead to increased employee retention. Effective communication will help the caregivers feel that the office staff take their concerns and problems seriously and are actively looking for a resolution with the caregiver. This feeling of respect and teamwork positively contributes to overall job satisfaction. If the caregiver feels satisfied at XXXXXXXX they will be less likely to quit and find work elsewhere, thus helping to stave off high turnover rates and maintain strong retention numbers.

Actively engaged employees who fully understand what is expected of them are more likely to meet those expectations. By and large, adults need to not only know what they are required to do as part of their job requirements, but they also need to have a complete understanding of why it is important. That understanding leads to increased compliance. To reach that understanding requires effective communication. When the office employees have the tools to better communicate with the caregivers, they will be able to better teach those caregivers what is expected of them by XXXXXXXX, Medicaid, and the State of New Mexico, which will result in better compliance.

With this understanding, I designed a checklist to use in the observations. The checklist focused on the behaviors that are negatively impacting communication, such as: not greeting the caregiver, using a frustrated tone, being dismissive and not engaged, not teaching clearly and verifying understanding. I wanted to be able to review the areas that were big issues but that could be adjusted and improved with a Training Workshop.

The checklist was designed in a way that I could just check off the behaviors as I observed them. I wrote “N/A” in any boxes where a particular situation did not take place. Once the observations were complete I tallied up the boxes to get statistics on what behaviors appeared most often. These metrics showed me which behaviors, whether desired or undesired, were most prevalent. Understanding where we, the department, stood with regard to these categories helped me not only shape the Training Workshop, but the post-workshop observations identified which parts of the workshop were successful and which parts needed improvement.

As part of my method for selecting which exchanges I observed and documented, I tried to select those that required a deeper more complicated level of interaction. For example, if a caregiver came in to the office just to get a copy of his or her schedule printed out, which took minimal interaction and very little communication, I did not observe and document that particular interaction. My objective was to observe complex interaction where the office staff member had to demonstrate a higher skill level of communication including teaching, coaching, and de-escalating. These are the behaviors I wanted to focus on and ultimately improve through the Training Workshop.

One week after the Training Workshop, I used the same observation process, the same checklist, and the same method for choosing interactions to observe the Operations Department. My intent was to determine if there had been an improvement in the quality of interactions between the office staff and the caregivers. The overall goal, at least in the short-term, was to identify whether or not the Training Workshop was a success.

PRE-WORKSHOP OBSERVATION RESULTS

Once the results were tallied and analyzed, the observations showed that there were several areas of opportunity with regard to the office staff’s communication skills. The data appeared overwhelmingly negative. There was room for improvement across the board, with several areas significantly more lacking than others. At first this data made developing the outline and agenda for the Training Workshop overwhelming, but once I grouped the data into categories I was able to better focus what the results were telling me. I reviewed each section and made notes on how to go about improving the scores in each category. There were too many areas that needed improvement to cover in a single workshop, so I prioritized the findings to what would ultimately improve communication.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

EVV Electronic Visit Verification
FTE Full-Time Employee (aka In-House Office Employee)
CG Caregiver
MCO Managed Care Organization

TABLE 1: PRE-OBSERVATION WORKSHOP RESULTS

Category	Behavior	Pre-Workshop %
Greetings	Greeting	70%
	Departmental Greeting	20%
Customer Service	FTE Friendly, Professional, and Engaged	50%
	FTE Used Empathetic Language	40%
	FTE Displayed Ownership	30%
	FTE Did NOT Display Ownership	20%
	FTE Frustrated	30%
	Departmental Handoff	20%
	No Departmental Handoff	50%
De-Escalation	Situation De-Escalated	20%
	Supervisor De-Escalated Situation	20%
Teaching	Verified Understanding	20%
	Did NOT Verify Understanding	50%
	FTE Could Not Explain Issue	30%
Resolution	FTE Demonstrated Understanding of Issue	20%
	FTE Resolved Issue	60%
	FTE Used Company Resources	0%
	FTE Sought Help From Team	20%
	FTE Referred CG Elsewhere	20%

DATA

I was surprised by the greetings data. Every caregiver that enters the department should be greeted even if they have to wait to be helped, but this only happened 20% of the time. More than half of the caregivers, 70%, were greeting upon being helped, but this number should be 100%. Greeting is a critical aspect of customer service. It sets the tone for the entire interaction and a caregiver already on the path to confrontation can be calmed and reassured right from the start with a proper, sincere greeting.

In the category of customer service, I saw quite a bit of opportunity. Only half of the office staff exhibited friendly, professional, and engaging behavior during the interactions. More alarming, 30% of the employees exhibited frustration with the caregivers during the interactions. With less than half of the office employees displaying key customer service traits such as using empathetic language (only 40%), displaying ownership (only 30%), and engaging in a proper interdepartmental handoff where the office employee physically takes the caregiver to another office employee and explains the situation (only 20%).

De-Escalations were only successful 20% of the time. Every other time de-escalation was necessary a supervisor had to be called in to handle the situation. This can be tied back to the fact that in every situation where de-escalation was unsuccessful the office employee failed to use empathetic language and ownership while interacting with the caregiver. Specifically, 40% of the office employees used empathetic language, and 30% of office employees displayed ownership. In fact, 30% of the time the office staff member showed frustration and aggravation during the interaction. Had these numbers been significantly higher, I believe there would have been less of a need for a supervisor to intervene to de-escalate the situation.

When our office employees try to teach a caregiver, whether it is explaining a rule or a situation or actually teaching the caregiver how to do something, there was a lack of verification of understanding. Sometimes the office employee would ask if the caregiver understood, but to truly verify that there was no miscommunication, it takes a demonstration of understanding. In only 20% of the occurrences did the office employee verify understanding.

DEVELOPMENT

The workshop was designed to broach topics such as greetings, body language, tone, empathetic language, and ownership. These were key concepts identified by results of the observations. For example, with only 20% of office staff properly employing de-escalation tactics as part of their interactions, I knew this was something that needed to be addressed in the workshop. Knowing how to properly de-escalate a situation improves relations and therefore customer service scores. Conversely, though only a small percentage used departmental resources such as SOPs and manuals to resolve the issue, I did not include this topic in the workshop because this area was not directly related to communication. Though taking advantage of company resources does need to be addressed with the staff, this falls more under the category of efficiency and productivity than communication. In retrospect I would not include this on the observation skills checklist in the future.

I organized the flow of the workshop to touch on these concepts in a logical progression, similar to the flow of a caregiver coming into the office. A caregiver is greeted, then there is an interaction, from there instruction, and finally a closing. Using this outline, I built the workshop to hit each of these points. The agenda is located in the appendices.

Greetings essentially are “first impressions” and they are a key component of good customer service and effective communication. A bad greeting, or no greeting at all, can create tension and frustration putting a potentially amicable interaction on the path to confrontation. On the other hand, a friendly and sincere greeting will make a caregiver feel seen, heard, and even valued, effectively easing tensions and setting a positive and productive tone for the interaction.

Since effective communication was the core of the workshop, I included an interactions section that dealt with various key components of effective communication. These components included using empathetic language, choosing words wisely, being mindful of both the tone of voice and body language, and learning how to de-escalate a situation. The observation results under the customer service category indicate that there needed to be a focus on how to speak to caregivers. With a lack of friendly, professional, and engaging attitudes, visible frustration, and lack of the use of empathetic language and displays of ownership, it was clear that I needed to dive deep into these topics in order to improve the behavior.

The results of the observations showed me that even when an office employee tried to thoroughly explain the situation, rule, or instructions to the caregiver, they did not commonly verify understanding. This means that we do not know if the caregiver understood what was expected of them and as a result could not be sure they would put it into practice. If we don't actively verify that the caregiver truly understood there is no way to know if that caregiver will be successful. Therefore, I knew effective teaching had to be included in the workshop.

THE WORKSHOP

To emphasize the benefit of a proper greeting, I made a video of what *not* to do. I filmed one of our in-house employees from the Operations Department. The video was filmed in the XXXXXXXX lobby and demonstrated a negative "first impression," the essence of a greeting. The video was well received by the attendees of the workshop. It clearly outlined the bad habits that need to be avoided not only with regard to greeting our caregivers, but also how such poor communication and customer service can look from the outside.

For the section in the workshop dedicated to the topic of interactions I decided to incorporate a visual – which is located in the appendices – and an activity. I passed a copy of the visual out to all of the attendees so that they could post it in their cubicles as a reference. I also developed a role-playing activity with a de-escalation scenario. In this activity, one attendee would play a disgruntled caregiver and another would play an office employee who knew that the situation at hand was largely the responsibility of the caregiver. The idea was to lay out a common, everyday interaction that all of the employees were familiar with and watch their teammates navigate the situation. After the exercise we discussed what went right and what went wrong with the scenario. My intention was to ensure everyone was engaged and receptive to the message.

From there I introduced the concept of effective instruction. I covered the importance of "adjusting for audience." Due to the fact that many of our caregivers have little to no experience with technology, I explained that it is crucial to ensure we are choosing our words carefully to assure that our audience understands; not necessarily in a way that *we* understand. I then followed up the discussion with another role-playing activity. In this activity I played a caregiver who had no experience with EVV and little experience with technology. I needed to be instructed on how to properly use EVV on one of the company issued tablets. One of the attendees played the office employee who was responsible for instructing me. I intentionally made the situation difficult and frustrating in the hopes of not only reiterating the customer service and de-escalation techniques learned earlier in the workshop, but to also emphasize how important it is to teach with the end user in mind. After the activity there was a discussion of what was

successful and what needed improvement. The discussion was positive and productive. The idea of demonstrating understanding was a new concept but the attendees were open to it.

The last section of the workshop was about wrapping up interactions. The workshop emphasized that a proper closing gives the caregiver a chance to get clarification or additional help without being rushed out the door. I created a visual – located in the appendices – which gave two examples of how to effectively close an interaction and a place to list a third close of their own design. This was also designed to be posted in their cubicles so they could reference the information any time they needed.

I closed with an open forum where the staff could ask questions and express concerns about adjusting their communication approach and applying the techniques they learned in the workshop. There were a few concerns regarding greetings. For example, I was asked how the office employee was going to be able to greet a caregiver entering the department if they were physically with another caregiver. I explained that a simple, “Good morning, we’ll be right with you,” said with eye contact and a smile would not take much focus from the customer at hand and would still make the entering caregiver feel welcomed.

There was also a question about verifying understanding and whether or not simply asking the caregiver to verbally respond with, “I understand” would suffice. The concern was that it would take too much time to have the caregiver explain everything again or actually demonstrate the task. First, I explained that although it may take extra time to have the caregiver verify understanding, it would take up significantly *more* time to explain the same concept to the caregiver multiple times. I then gave the attendees an analogy: I told them to imagine that their paychecks hinged on whether or not the caregiver went back out into the field and performed the task without incident. I suggested that if they lost money each time the caregiver made a mistake due to misunderstanding, would they be far less reluctant to take the time to verify the concept was clearly understood. I then added that, in reality, as a company we rely on the caregivers performing their jobs because without the caregivers taking care of our clients, we would not be receiving money from the state. Without that money XXXXXXXX wouldn’t exist and we would all be working other places. In reality, I explained, our paychecks *do* hinge on the caregivers having a complete understanding of what is expected of them. I believed that the discussion and the dialogue that was a result of the workshop was a success and looked forward to seeing that reflected in the post-workshop observations.

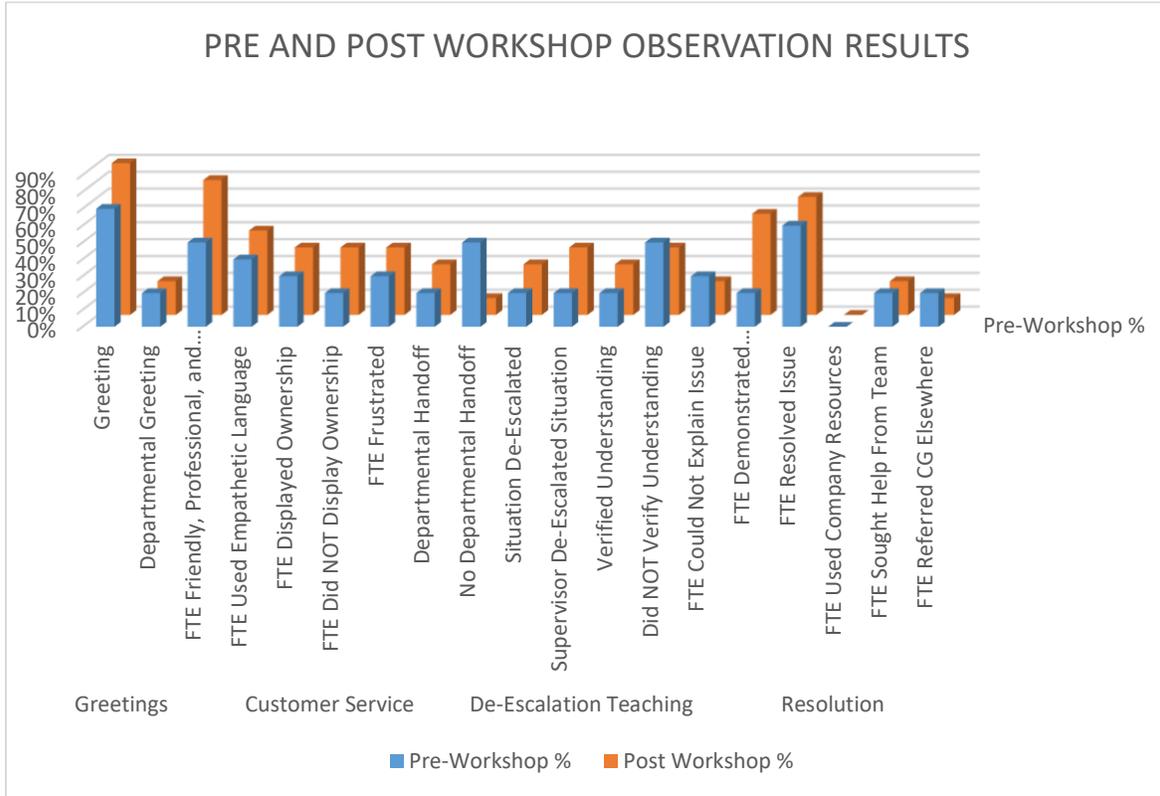
RESULTS

One week after the training workshop was held I conducted ten more observations in an effort to see if techniques outlined in the workshop were put into practice. Using the same observation checklist that I used in the pre-workshop observations I documented ten additional observations between office employees and caregivers. Six office employees were observed in both sets of observations, but none of the caregivers were duplicated; this is because the Services at Home Division has more than 1,100 caregivers.

TABLE 2: COMPLETE OBSERVATION DATA

Category	Behavior	Pre-Workshop %	Post Workshop %	Diff. %
Greetings	Greeting	70%	90%	20%
	Departmental Greeting	20%	20%	0%
Customer Service	FTE Friendly, Professional, and Engaged	50%	80%	30%
	FTE Used Empathetic Language	40%	50%	10%
	FTE Displayed Ownership	30%	40%	10%
	FTE Did NOT Display Ownership	20%	40%	20%
	FTE Frustrated	30%	40%	10%
	Departmental Handoff	20%	30%	10%
	No Departmental Handoff	50%	10%	-40%
De-Escalation	Situation De-Escalated	20%	30%	10%
	Supervisor De-Escalated Situation	20%	40%	20%
Teaching	Verified Understanding	20%	30%	10%
	Did NOT Verify Understanding	50%	40%	-10%
	FTE Could Not Explain Issue	30%	20%	-10%
Resolution	FTE Demonstrated Understanding of Issue	20%	60%	40%
	FTE Resolved Issue	60%	70%	10%
	FTE Used Company Resources	0%	0%	0%
	FTE Sought Help From Team	20%	20%	0%
	FTE Referred CG Elsewhere	20%	10%	-10%

GRAPH 1



DATA

In the category of greetings, in the second observation 90% of caregivers were greeted upon stepping up to the office employee’s desk. However, only 20% of caregivers were greeted upon entering the department. I found this disappointing as greetings were a significant portion of the open discussion during the Training Workshop.

With regard to customer service, 80% of office employees were friendly and professional, however 40% of office employees still displayed aggravation during the interaction. Only 30% of employees did a complete department handoff with a report. While 50% of the employees used empathetic language, only 40% displayed ownership. A disappointing statistic is that 40% of the employees actively did not display ownership by pushing the blame off on others, including the caregiver.

In only 30% of the observations the week after the workshop was the office employee able to de-escalate the situation without supervisor intervention. Of the ten interactions observed, there were four that required a supervisor to get involved in order to resolve the situation. In all of the situations where the office employee was unsuccessful in de-escalating the situation without supervisor involvement, that office member did not use empathetic language or show ownership. This is a correlation that was apparent in the first observation as well.

Despite the emphasis on verifying understanding, only 30% of the office employees sought a demonstration of understanding from the caregiver. Though in other cases the office employee asked if the caregiver understood, the caregiver was not asked to paraphrase the instructions back or demonstrate the task on their own.

There are clear areas of success where the workshop is concerned. First, the number of caregivers properly greeted went from 70% to 90% which can be considered an improvement. However, the number of caregivers who were greeted upon entering the department remained at 20%.

The number of FTEs who were friendly, professional, and engaging increased from 50% to 80%. In the first observation, though many of the office employees displayed one or two of these characteristics, only 50% displayed all three. Using professional language and maintaining a professional demeanor was the most common trait observed. Smiling and making eye contact are aspects of friendliness I was looking for as part of the observations. Being engaging involves inquiring about the caregiver's day, showing genuine interest in the caregiver, and asking thorough questions to get to the root of the issue. After the workshop there was an increase of 30% where office employees displayed all three of these traits. The sense of being interrupted and inconvenienced, which was so prevalent in the first observation, was not as obvious in the second round of observations.

Despite the broadly engaging attitude, the office employees still largely did not verify that the caregiver understood the instructions by either having the caregiver demonstrate understanding or paraphrase the situation back to the employee. The amount of office employees who verified understanding through demonstration increased by only 10% while the amount of employees who did not verify understanding only decreased by 10%. This was not the result I was expecting to receive after focusing on this in the Training Workshop.

The use of empathetic language such as, "I understand," and "I know this must be frustrating," increased from the first observation to the second, but only by 10%. With one of the visuals listing out empathetic language examples, I expected to see more substantial growth in this area. The displaying of ownership by using phrases such as, "I will help you resolve this issue," and avoiding language such as, "this isn't my fault," and, "I didn't cause it," also only increased by 10%.

RECOMMENDATIONS

I recommend that I review and adjust the focus and approach of the Training Workshop and that it be held again in four to six weeks. Prior to the second workshop, as with the first, I recommend that I do a round of observations to see if there are any additional changes to the results that show perhaps some improved behaviors. From the results of this third observation I would make any necessary additional changes to the workshop agenda in order to ensure that the information wasn't duplicated if it was unnecessary, and that there were no missed opportunities.

Though there might be additional changes that would be required pending the results of the additional observation, there are some changes that I would make based on the current results

and analysis. The first change to be made would be that I would remove the section on greetings. Though greetings are important and equate to the first impression of the department and the company, I believe we can make the same point with a simple visual that includes verbiage like, "Don't forget to smile and say good morning," or, "Make sure you let the caregiver know you see them." These types of signs with friendly and fun fonts on colorful paper can serve as a reminder without needing to devote time out of a one-hour training workshop to the subject.

Since I will be removing the section devoted to greetings, I would put more focus on language with visuals that have examples of bad phrases to avoid and what to use instead. I would then add an activity where we write additional examples as a group. I believe this is more engaging than just reading the handout and listening to the examples. In groups, the attendees would be given a handout with three bad examples of terminology that should be avoided such as, "I didn't do it," and, "I don't know what to tell you." Each group would have to correct these bad examples and turn them into acceptable phrases to use, then we would review as a whole. I believe this activity would be engaging and solicit better results.

The next change I would make would be to the de-escalation scenario. First, I believe what made this unsuccessful was that it was only engaging to those who participated. In the next workshop I would divide the attendees up into three or four groups. I will have arranged ahead of time for two employees to act out a skit of a de-escalation gone wrong. After the skit is played out, the groups will have to list out what went wrong in the skits. Then, each group will nominate two members who will have to act out the scene again but with a successful de-escalation. This will require everyone to analyze the exchange and indicate what went wrong and think critically about how to improve it. This is a higher level of engagement and I believe it will produce much better results.

The final change I would make to the training workshop would be to change the second role-playing exercise into a demonstration of how to properly instruct a caregiver and have them demonstrate understanding. Using the same de-escalation scenario as in the initial workshop, I will have pre-arranged for two employees to act it out poorly. After the demonstration we, as a whole, will discuss the issues. The two employees will then act the same scenario out in a way that is successful, after which an additional discussion will take place regarding the difference and why it was improved.

At the end of the workshop, instead of a completely open forum for discussion, I will have them demonstrate their understanding in the form of a test. The test will include activities such as a page filled with words. The employee will have to circle the words that would be considered empathetic. The activity would also include a section where there is a de-escalation scenario that goes badly. They would have to indicate what went wrong and how to correct it. Though this is exactly like the role playing activity, because the test is a solo activity, this will help demonstrate retention. The employees will turn in the tests and upon analysis I will be able to determine which of the employees may need additional training and which seem to have a firm grasp on the subject.

I recommend that I do post-workshop observations, but I suggest increasing the amount. One should take place one week after the workshop, another one month after, and a final one three

months after the workshop. This will ensure maximum retention and application as well as detect any employees who may need additional training in this area beyond the workshop.

My final recommendation would be to run thorough reporting *before* the second workshop takes place. I believe it is imperative to run a detailed report showing levels of compliance in EVV, scheduling, and records. This report will be run again six months after the second workshop to determine if there has been a positive effect on compliance and whether the workshop should become a staple part of training office staff at XXXXXXXX.

CONCLUSIONS

Though there were several positive behaviors that became more frequent and several negative behaviors that became less frequent, the changes were by a small margin. As a result, I would not consider the workshop a success. From the open forum discussion that took place at the end of the workshop, I expected to see a significant increase in the number of caregivers who were greeted upon entering the department. I was surprised to see that number hadn't changed at all. In addition to greetings, I expected to see the biggest increase in positive interactions in the areas of teaching and de-escalation. I chose both of these areas to use role-playing activities to emphasize the point. I made this decision because I believed a role-playing activity would be the most engaging way to ensure the message was received. The results, which show only a 10% increase in both de-escalations without supervisor intervention and having the caregiver demonstrate understanding, indicate that this approach was unsuccessful. Overall, I believe a workshop is a good means to train the XXXXXXXX office staff as long as the approach is adjusted as recommended.

APPENDIX B

PRE-WORKSHOP OBSERVATION NOTES

Observation #1

In this interaction, a CG came in and spoke to a scheduler regarding an issue with the Managed Care Organization (MCO) issued tablet. The CG was greeted by the FTE with, “What can I do for you?” The FTE was able to identify the issue as a user error and attempted to explain to the CG how to correct the error; the FTE did not verify understanding. The CG was aggravated about the missing pay due to the EVV error. The FTE was unable to de-escalate the situation and had to get a supervisor involved before passing the CG off to the payroll department to be issued a paper timecard. Neither the FTE nor the supervisor walked the CG over to the payroll department after the situation was explained. They pointed the CG in the direction of payroll and turned their attention elsewhere. It is also noted that the FTE’s aggravation with the CG’s anger and frustration was evident. Even though the situation was user error, the FTE was quick to blame Authenticare (AC) the Electronic Visit Verification (EVV) software, payroll, and the CG themselves before the FTE fully listened to the CG’s issue.

Observation #2

In this interaction, a CG came in and spoke to a scheduler regarding an issue with the EVV phone system. The CG was greeted by the FTE with, “How can I help you?” The FTE was friendly and engaging with the CG. The FTE did not immediately know how to solve the CG’s problem but sought out another FTE to help identify the issue. The two FTEs struggled to explain the issue to the CG and had to then escalate the situation to a supervisor. This was not due to the CG being agitated but due to the need for assistance in communicating with the CG. None of the FTEs asked for the CG to paraphrase the instructions to verify understanding, they did at least ask for verbal confirmation and the CG said, “I understand.” Once the situation was explained, the CG was sent to payroll to pick up time sheets. The CG was not escorted to payroll, but directed.

Observation #3

In this interaction, a CG came in and spoke to a payroll rep regarding a discrepancy with their paycheck. The FTE greeted the CG with, “How can I help you?” The FTE was friendly and engaging with the CG. The FTE knew how to resolve the CG’s issues. The FTE explained that the CG went over duration on a shift and also did not correctly use the EVV system. The CG verbalized understanding, but the FTE did not verify understanding through having the CG explain the instructions back to the FTE. The CG had to also see scheduling to get copies of scheduling related documents. The FTE pointed to the scheduling department but did not escort the CG. The FTE displayed empathy with the CG.

Observation #4

In this interaction, a CG came in to speak to the Employee Records department about an expired employment document. The CG was not greeted and had to clear their throat twice before the FTE finally turned around and acknowledged the CG. The FTE said, “Yeah?” as means to greet CG. The CG at this point was agitated. The CG wanted to know why they were taken off the schedule. The FTE gave them a list of the expired employment documents, but did not offer any additional explanations for the CG’s situation. The FTE directed them back to scheduling

without attempting to explain the situation. The FTE matched the CG's frustration with frustration of their own. FTE did not take ownership for the situation or show empathy.

Observation #5

In this interaction, the CG came in to speak with a payroll rep regarding some shifts that were not paid. The FTE greeted the CG with, "How may I help you?" The FTE continued to greet other CGs as they came into the area and sat down. The FTE was professional, but was not overly friendly nor were they truly engaging. The FTE knew how to resolve the issue and quickly figured out the root of the problem that the CG was having. The CG had worked over on their shift and had not used EVV properly. The FTE adequately explained the issue and the CG nodded understanding, but the FTE did not verify understanding other than that.

Observation #6

In this interaction, the CG came in to speak with someone about some complaints they had. The FTE greeted the CG with, "What can I do for you today?" The FTE also continued to greet other CGs that came into the area. The FTE was friendly, professional and engaging with the CG. After the CG explained the situation they were having, the FTE paraphrased the situation back to the CG. The FTE was not familiar with the situation or how to fix it, but the FTE knew which department the CG needed to go to. The FTE physically walked the CG over to the records department then explained the situation to the FTE in that department so that the CG did not have to explain it twice. The FTE used empathetic language and displayed ownership, apologizing for not being able to solve the issue and having to take them to another department.

Observation #7

In this interaction, the CG came in because they were having issues clocking in and out. The FTE was friendly and polite and engaging, they did not greet the CG. This could be because the CG walked up to the desk already talking and did not give the CG a chance to offer a greeting. The FTE knew how to resolve the issue and was able to explain the problem to the CG. The FTE asked the CG if they understood, but did not verify understanding by having the CG paraphrase the instructions.

Observation #8

In this interaction, the CG had received a call from an FTE to come into the office to address an issue. The FTE did not greet or acknowledge the CG at first. When the FTE finally turned their attention to the CG they still did not greet the CG but launched into the reason for the call, which was issues with the CG's EVV clocks and the fact that the CG would be receiving a write up. The FTE knew what the problem was, the CG kept working over duration on shifts despite several alleged warnings. The FTE explained the issue and what the CG was expected to do to correct it. The FTE did not verify understanding but handed the CG a pen and the write up and told them to sign. The FTE was clearly frustrated with the situation and showed that frustration to the CG.

Observation #9

In this interaction, the CG came in to see a scheduler. The CG was greeted by the FTE with, "What can I do for you?" the FTE knew how to resolve the issue of the CG being over duration on their schedule but they were unable to explain the issue successfully. This was largely due to

a language barrier. The FTE sought out an FTE from another department who spoke Spanish and had that FTE translate. The CG was agitated during this exchange, which could also be attributed to the language barrier, but between both FTEs the CG was calmed down. The CG had verbalized understanding, but neither FTE verified that the CG understood through having the CG paraphrase the instructions back to them.

Observation #10

In this interaction, a CG was called in to speak to their client supervisor due to EVV errors and working over duration on their shift. The FTE greeted that CG with, "Thank you for coming in," then proceeded to explain the situation. The FTE was friendly, professional, and engaging. The FTE listened to the CG's explanations of why the issues were happening and showed understanding by paraphrasing the situation back to the CG. The FTE knew how to resolve the issue. The FTE explained to the CG what it meant to be over duration and how to avoid it. Then the FTE asked the CG to explain it back to the FTE. Then the FTE explained the issues with the EVV system and again asked the CG to explain it back. The CG was agitated at the start of the interaction at having had to come all the way into the office, but the FTE's attitude and behavior calmed the CG down without the situation needing to be escalated. The CG needed to see payroll for some time sheets so the FTE walked the CG to the payroll department and gave the FTE there a report of the situation. The original FTE used empathetic language throughout the entire interaction and displayed ownership in the situation.

APPENDIX C

POST-WORKSHOP OBSERVATION NOTES

Observation #1

In this interaction, a CG came in to discuss a change in schedule. Due to this change in schedule, the CG had issues with the EVV system. The FTE smiled and greeted the CG with, "How are you today?" After a brief exchange of pleasantries, the FTE asked, "What can I do for you?" The FTE was friendly and engaging with the CG. The CG was concerned, but was never visibly agitated during the exchange. The FTE understood the root of the problem and was able to thoroughly explain the situation and how to fix it to the CG. The FTE asked the CG to explain the instructions back in an attempt to check understanding. The FTE used empathetic language such as "I'm sorry," and "I understand this is confusing." When it came time to have the CG see a different department, the FTE physically walked the CG to the FTE of the different department and fully explained the situation so the CG did not have to repeat the situation.

Observation #2

In this interaction, a CG came in to request a schedule change on behalf of the client. The FTE they walked up to did not initially greet the CG however after a few moments where the FTE continued to work on the computer and make various notes, the FTE looked up and greeted the CG. The FTE was courteous and repeated the situation back to the CG to demonstrate understanding. The FTE understood the situation and knew how to solve the issue. The FTE resolved the situation but upon explaining the issue and how to correct it to the CG, there was no verification of understanding. The CG was mildly agitated with the answer to the query and didn't fully understand that it was not a company rule but a state mandate. The FTE was unable to de-escalate the situation and had to involve a supervisor. At the end of the interaction, after the supervisor resolved the situation and made the CG feel better, the CG asked a question that involved another department. Instead of taking the CG to the next department, the FTE sent the CG with directions. The FTE blamed the state, the MCO, and even other departments rather than using empathetic language.

Observation #3

In this interaction, the CG came in to discuss a pay discrepancy, however they went to the wrong department. The FTE greeted the CG with an enthusiastic "Hello, what can I do for you today?" The FTE continued to smile and greet other CGs that passed by without allowing it to distract from helping the situation at hand. The FTE demonstrated understanding of the situation but as the situation involved a different department was unable to actively solve the situation for the CG. The FTE walked the CG over to the correct department, gave the FTE of that department a full accounting of the situation and ensured the CG was comfortable with the transition before leaving the CG with the new FTE. During the entire exchange the FTE used empathetic language and owned the situation by using phrases such as, "We will make sure to get this handled for you."

Observation #4

In this interaction, a CG came into the office to discuss an EVV error. The CG claimed that the EVV system was malfunctioning. The CG was visibly agitated from the start of the interaction. The FTE was friendly and professional throughout the interaction and actively worked to calm

the CG down and change the tone of the interaction. The FTE demonstrated understanding of the situation and was able to explain the situation and how to correct it to the CG. The FTE explained the root cause and how to correct the problem, but did not check for understanding. The FTE did not have to involve a supervisor to de-escalate the situation and the CG left calm.

Observation #5

In this interaction, the CG came in to discuss missing pay. The CG was visibly agitated and raised his voice. The FTE greeted the CG and tried to remain professional and friendly for most of the interaction, however eventually after seeing that the situation was not going to be de-escalated without supervisor involvement the FTE became short with the CG. The FTE was able to explain the issue and the root cause once the supervisor stepped in as a mediator, but did not check for understanding. The FTE also said, "This isn't my fault, it's yours," at one point, which is not only not using empathetic language, but it is not displaying ownership.

Observation #6

In this interaction, the CG came in responding to a call to report to the office. The FTE greeted the CG warmly and was friendly and professional throughout the interaction. The FTE demonstrated understanding of the situation by repeating the situation back to the CG. The FTE knew how to resolve the issue and was able to explain everything clearly to the CG verifying understanding with the CG. CG was agitated at the start of the interaction because of being called into the office, but by the end of the interaction the CG was smiling and laughing. The CG also required assistance in another department. The FTE walked the CG over to the department and gave the other FTE a full report for hand off. The FTE used empathetic language and owned the entire situation.

Observation #7

In this interaction, a CG reported regarding an issue with their employee file. The FTE did not greet the CG. The CG had to ask the FTE if they were able to help them. The FTE was not really courteous or attentive. The FTE nodded understanding but did not verbalize understanding or paraphrase the situation back to the CG. The FTE explained the missing documents to the CG but did not check for understanding. During the interaction, the CG, who did not start off the interaction agitated, became agitated. Another FTE, not a supervisor, got involved to try and de-escalate the situation. The FTE was visibly frustrated with the CG for allowing the document to expire in the first place and did not own the situation by stating this frustration to the CG.

Observation #8

In this interaction, the CG came into the office in response to another FTE's call to report. The CG walked up to a different FTE. The FTE did greet the CG with, "What can I do for you?" However, the FTE was not engaged and seemed almost put off by the CG's interruption. The FTE did not know the situation, but rather than dig into it and try and help, the FTE said, "You need to talk to the person who called you." The CG became agitated at the dismissal, a supervisor had to step in and de-escalate the situation.

Observation #9

In this interaction, the CG came into the office in response to a voicemail from the FTE. The FTE greeted the CG and was professional and engaged with the CG. The FTE knew about the

situation and was able to resolve the issue. The FTE was able to fully explain the root of the problem and how to correct it moving forward but did not verify that the CG understood. The FTE used empathetic language like, "I understand this is frustrating."

Observation #10

In this interaction, the CG came into the office because of an issue with the schedule and the EVV system. The CG asked for the FTE directly and was directed to their desk. The FTE greeted the CG immediately and was professional and friendly. The FTE demonstrated understanding of the situation by paraphrasing it and knew how to resolve the issue. The FTE explained the scheduling and EVV situation and resolution clearly and verified understanding by having the CG explain it back to the FTE in their own words. The CG was agitated at the beginning of the interaction, but the situation was very quickly de-escalated without need for supervisor involvement. The FTE used empathetic language such as, "I understand you are frustrated," as well as owned the interaction by using language such as, "Let's see if we can fix this together."

APPENDIX D

WORKSHOP AGENDA

9:00AM – Welcome and Introduction

- Why are we here?
- What will we learn?
- Why does it matter?

9:05AM – Greetings: Setting the Tone

- Why does greeting matter?
- When should you greet someone?
- How should you greet someone?

9:10AM – Interactions

- What you say: Choosing your words wisely (visual).
- How you say it: How tone of voice and body language can change what and how the listener interprets what you are saying (demonstration).
- De-escalations: How to defuse a tense situation while addressing the caregiver's issue (role play).

9:35AM – Teaching

- Choosing the right vocabulary.
- Checking for understanding (role play).

9:50PM – Happy Endings

- Close your interaction with the right sentiment (visual).

9:55PM – Conclusion and Recap

APPENDIX E

CUSTOMER SERVICE HANDOUT

THE CUSTOMERS PERCEPTION IS YOUR REALITY!

Customer Service Commandments

Customer service is not a department, it's a attitude. Throughout our careers we will face challenging situations. There will be times, whether over the phone or in person, that we will have to calm a client or customer down.

This handout is to provide you tips on how to better manage customer escalations.

Tips for Success

- * Own the experience.
- * Leverage all resources, including peers, to help find a solution.
- * Adjust your communication style to your audience.
- * Use a positive tone and choose words that are non confrontational.
- * Remain calm and don't take it personally.
- * Be mindful of your body language and be sure to project a positive and approachable attitude.
- * Actively empathize with the customer and his/her situation.
- * APOLOGIZE!
- * Develop an action plan and inform the customer of next steps to resolution.
- * Find a **SOLUTION!!**

Examples of Ownership/Empathetic Language

- * I can see how important this is to you.
- * I understand this can be frustrating.
- * I know this process can be confusing.
- * I'm sorry to see that you're in this situation.
- * Let's see if we can solve this together.
- * I am going to own this and help you.
- * I am very sorry to hear that.
- * I understand.
- * I appreciate you explaining the situation.
- * Thank you for your patience.

APPENDIX F

WOW YOUR CUSTOMER

Utilize your new knowledge from the Customer Service Training to wow our Customers

Employee Name & Graduation Day _____

How will you wow today?

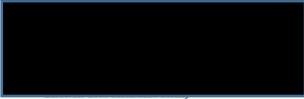
Examples:

- I was happy to help you, is there anything else I can do for you today?
- I was a pleasure helping you, have I answered all your questions and concerns?

Write your Own Statement: _____

3721 Rutledge Rd NE
Albuquerque, NM 87109
Phone: 505-366-2315
Fax: 505-366-5555
E-mail: Ebailey3@good-sam.com

Nobody Raves about Average Customer Service!
Go and wow your customers TODAY!



Utilize your new knowledge from the Customer Service Training to wow our Customers

Employee Name & Graduation Day _____

How will you wow today?

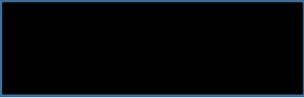
Examples:

- I was happy to help you, is there anything else I can do for you today?
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Albuquerque, NM 87109
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Nobody Raves about Average Customer Service!
Go and wow your customers TODAY!



Utilize your new knowledge from the Customer Service Training to wow our Customers

Employee Name & Graduation Day _____

How will you wow today?

Examples:

- I was happy to help you, is there anything else I can do for you today?
- I was a pleasure helping you, have I answered all your questions and concerns?

Write your Own Statement: _____

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Nobody Raves about Average Customer Service!
Go and wow your customers TODAY!



APPENDIX G

DE-ESCALATION SCENARIO

Participants:

Two Attendees

Instructions:

One attendee will play an angry caregiver and the other attendee will play the office employee. Each will read their role privately, neither knowing the details of the other's role.

Caregiver Scenario:

You are a caregiver. You come into the office because you haven't been paid for a month and you don't understand why. You have called the office several times over the past week and a half and have never received a call back. You are visibly angry and inconsolable.

Office Employee Scenario:

You are an office employee. A caregiver comes to you. They have not been paid because their time punches in EVV are not syncing up with the schedule because the caregiver is not working the schedule as it appears in the system. There are notes that the schedulers have tried to reach out to the caregiver to correct the address the issue and correct it moving forward.

Goal:

To demonstrate de-escalations through live examples.

APPENDIX H

TEACHING SCENARIO

Participants:

1 Attendee

Me (Administrative Manager)

Instructions:

The Attendee will teach the Administrative Manager how to clock in and out using the EVV application on the tablet.

Scenario:

The Administrative Manager is a CG who doesn't own a smartphone and has never used one or a tablet before. The CG needs to be taught how to use the EVV application to clock in and out for their shifts. The Attendee is the office employee responsible for teaching the CG how to properly use the tablet. They will need to teach the CG how to clock in and out, both traditionally and manually, and how to check to ensure they clocked in and out appropriately.

Goal:

To demonstrate how to teach and check for understanding.