



## MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE CHANGE PROJECT PROFILE

Jim Taliaferro Community Mental Health  
Center

Logo

602 SW 38th Street  
Lawton, Oklahoma

The Jim Taliaferro Community Health Center is a comprehensive mental health and substance abuse services serving southwest Oklahoma, with a main office in Lawton and three satellite clinics in Duncan, Anadarko, and Altus. The Center offers inpatient, outpatient, day treatment, emergency intervention, counseling, screening, referral, community education, aftercare, psychosocial rehabilitation, supported employment, intensive case management, home-based children's services and gate keeping evaluations.

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**CHANGE LEADER:** Christy Red Elk

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**TEAM MEMBERS:** Nivian Rozumialski, Judy Wallace, Brenda Ototivo

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**LOCATION:** Lawton clinic

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**LEVEL OF CARE:** Triage to outpatient or inpatient mental health or substance abuse treatment

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**POPULATION:** Male and female adults with substance abuse and/or mental health

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**AIM ADDRESSED:** To reduce waiting time

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**START DATE:** May 2007

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**PROJECT STATUS:** Sustained

### GOALS AND MEASURES

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The wait time for clients seeking an assessment for services at the Lawton site was as long as 45 days. We set a goal to reduce waiting time for outpatient services, which include group treatment for men and women with co-occurring disorders; substance abuse treatment, and our case management service, which refers, links, or advocates for clients who need employment, vocational rehabilitation, food, or shelter.

Our project measured time from first contact to assessment and time from assessment to treatment.

### CHANGES IMPLEMENTED

Jim Taliaferro Community Mental Health Center was the first community mental health center to be recruited as a provider for the Oklahoma Strengthening Treatment Access and Retention-State Initiative (STAR-SI) project in spring 2007. The first change we made as a result of the walk-through at the Lawton Clinic was to create a more welcoming environment. With small changes such as plants, pictures on the walls, a coffee and water bar and other refreshments available to waiting clients, the Lawton site now has a more inviting lobby.



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A walk-through also helped us identify a need to improve time to treatment. Before the change, clients were required to make an appointment for an assessment, with a usual wait time of 45 days for an assessment for outpatient services. We found that we had a lot of no-shows with the long wait, as clients either forgot about their appointments or found services elsewhere.

For our first PDSA Cycle, we designated one triage counselor to assist walk-in clients only, on a specific day of the week. The two other triage counselors continued to take appointments.

We saw immediate improvements, as the walk-in counselor was able to complete assessments immediately. Clients who were not deemed eligible for services at our center could leave with a referral to another provider. The triage coordinator saw that this system was meeting client needs much better and decided to eliminate appointments entirely. Now patients know that they can come between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. any day Monday through Friday for a walk-in assessment.

### BUSINESS CASE IMPACT

- With an increase in census, we can bill the state for additional case management and assessments
- Staff morale has improved. Staff is working at or over capacity; we have already hired an additional triage counselor
- Clients are pleased that they don't have to wait for services and can see a doctor much sooner; more engaged in treatment

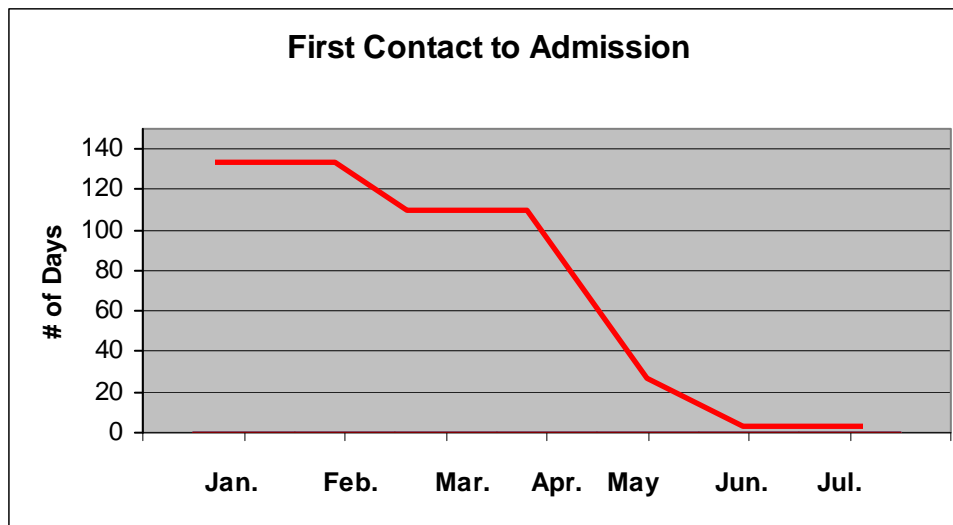
### LESSONS LEARNED

- Don't attempt more than one change at a time
- Be sure to inform clients and staff of the change
- Successful change generates ideas for related changes and improvements
- Data collection is essential; it's amazing how much we learned from keeping timeliness charts

Early on in the project we did encounter some problems, in especially forgetting to inform the public and front line staff. It is very important to inform both so that they know and understand what is going on and to reduce stress. It also allows for front line staff to accept that our waiting room may be full at times.

### SUSTAINABILITY PLANS

While we have sustained the improvement (reduced waiting time). The NIATx process improvement model helped to keep us focused on making changes in a systematic, logical manner. It also helped to focus on one particular change at a time. This project helped to identify future projects, such as possibly streamlining the paperwork and data entry processes for continued improvement.



**Figure 1**  
Wait time reduced at Jim Taliaffero Community Mental Health Center, Lawton,  
Oklahoma