



## How could we have missed that?

### *Using the walk-through as a workforce development tool*

Change Leader Karen Rathbun has been with NRI Community Services for nearly two decades. Starting out as a counselor for NRICS' child and family services, Karen has grown professionally with the organization. In 2001, she became the Quality Improvement Director for the organization. NRICS became a member of NIATx in 2003, offering Karen more opportunities to implement process improvement. One NIATx strategy that has transformed NRICS organization-wide is the walk-through, which Karen has found to be an excellent tool for workforce development.



The NRICS Residential Substance Abuse Change Team

Back Row: Amy Skurka, Judy Bolzani, Karen Rathbun, and Marcia Andreozzi

Front: Allan McKinnon and Mark Mason

Missing: Sally McAuley

“The walk-through is a simple exercise that really opens your eyes to how your organization is working, for both your internal and external customers,” she comments. “My eyes are opened every time.”

In mid-2005, Karen began to test offering the walk-through exercise to new staff and student interns. “We asked new hires to go through our processes just as if they were clients new to NRICS,” she explains. “From their experiences we gained valuable information on how to improve both our client services and new employee orientation.”

Karen cites the recent experience of a student intern as a good example. “We asked the intern to walk-through the orientation program we have for individuals considering residential treatment.” One of the first things that the intern noticed was that there was no table for clients to lean on to complete the required forms during the orientation session.

“How could we have missed that?”



Karen describes an additional benefit of offering the walk-through exercise as part of employee orientation for all new hires. “It’s an excellent way to introduce all new staff to the PDSA Cycle.”

NRICS includes approximately 250 staff, and Karen reports that staff regularly conduct PDSA Cycles in all areas of the organization. Working with NIATx has been an incredibly freeing experience, adds Karen.

“Historically, red tape has bogged down efforts to make changes in addiction treatment and mental health services. At NRICS, change cycles have become a part of the organizational culture.”

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### NRI Community Services, Inc

*A Non Profit Provider of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services*



*NRI Community Services (NRICS) is a non-profit, 501(c) (3) health and human service organization with offices in Woonsocket, Pawtucket, and Coventry Rhode Island. Originally funded as a community mental health center, NRICS has expanded its scope of services to include outpatient and residential substance abuse treatment, sober housing, tobacco cessation services, supportive housing, and violence prevention and intervention. NRICS is licensed and funded by the state of Rhode Island to provide outpatient and residential substance abuse and co-occurring treatment services to publicly insured, uninsured, and low-income individuals and families. NRICS has fully integrated its intake, assessment, treatment, and aftercare processes to better respond to clients with co-occurring substance abuse and mental health problems.*