Daybreak Youth Services

11704 East Sprague D#4
Spokane Valley, WA 99206
(509) 444-7033
www.daybreakinfo.org

> Founded in 1980 by a group of concerned citizens, Daybreak's inpatient and outpatient programs treat about 1,300 young people between the ages of 12 and 17 from Washington, Idaho and Oregon each year. After 18 months of NIATx participation, Daybreak has improved its admissions flow, adapted to a substantial loss in government dollars (by dramatically readjusting the case-mix), improved client no-shows, and is now serving more clients with a reduced budget.

REDUCING NO-SHOWS

Change Leader:	Richard Miles, rmiles@daybreakinfo.org
Team Members:	J. Loudermilk, F. Smith, J. Delarosa, R. Brockway, K. Smith, M.Bruch, and A. Berestoff
Location:	Outpatient department
Level of Care:	Outpatient
Population:	All outpatient clients in two locations
Aim Addressed:	Reduce no-shows
Start Date:	December 1, 2003
Project Status:	Sustained

GOALS AND MEASURES

Prior to the beginning of the NIATx project, Daybreak was not regularly measuring client no-shows. We knew many clients were not showing up and thought it important to address our no-show rate in our first Change Project. We quickly discovered that getting the data was a painstaking task (hand-counting no-shows from separate appointment books). We were surprised to find that 28% of the scheduled appointments resulted in no-shows for the month of October 2003.

The no-show rate had a negative impact on our treatment successes and our financial bottom line. Because adolescents primarily need appointment times after school hours, from 2:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., losing two to three hours a day to no-shows was not acceptable. We decided to aim to reduce no-shows to 10% of scheduled appointments, and to define a no-show as any missed appointment without 24-hour notice.

CHANGES IMPLEMENTED

- Our first project was to simplify the way we measured no-shows. We assumed that if the counselors received prompt feedback about their no-show rates, they would be more motivated to implement changes to improve the situation. We had been using a paper-and-pencil "Service Activity Log" (SAL), which was a billing document that reported services rendered, but not "services not rendered because of no-shows." By December 1, 2003 (after a few pilot tests), we were ready to implement an electronic SAL through which billable service and no-show data was

compiled automatically, providing counselors daily feedback about their no-show rates. We were pleased to see no-show rates drop from 26.3% in November 2003 to 22.2% in December 2003.

- We began piloting the next cycle toward the end of December. One counselor, with the help of a secretary, began making reminder calls to all of her clients the day before appointments. This counselor's no-show rate showed quick improvement so we decided to expand this practice to all clinicians and sites. January no-shows dramatically dropped to 15.8%. We had completed the process by early February. February no-shows were 15.4%.

- Though February no-shows remained low, we had not reached our 10% goal. Group no-shows were higher than individual no-shows were, so we decided to underline the quick feedback of the SALs by sending twice-monthly emails to the counselors, pointing out their no-show trends in relation to the overall group. At the same time, we decided to reward group attendance. After consulting with the clients, we decided to reward groups with 90% attendance with a pizza party or similar event at the end of the month. Weekly progress graphs were posted in main group rooms to provide feedback to the clients.

IMPACT AND LESSONS LEARNED

This was one of our first disciplined attempts at rapid-cycle improvement and it had significant impact on our bottom line and our motivation to move forward with additional change processes. Its success has shaped additional improvements that have enabled this department to operate with a tolerable profit margin.

No-Show Rates

Staff' resistance to change presented an early and significant barrier to process improvement exercises. Our staff's initial early response was that it would take "too much time." They indicated that they did not have enough time to complete what they were presently being asked to do. Any additional request would just be way, way too much. We were able to demonstrate that a series of small changes can be implemented with good results. Staff members were able to see that by doing these changes they could be more effective and have a bigger impact on the young people that they were working with each day.

The process of setting goals, using data, and enlisting staff in generating changes allowed the staff to get enthusiastic about change and reduced their ambivalence. Many clients were also enthusiastic about being involved in a solution to a problem.

We maintained these processes with some minor problems and adjustments to the present day. There were subsequent no-show elevations as high as 21% as we tweaked and adjusted the processes. During the 12-month period ending in October 2005, the average no-show rate was 10.4%.