

St. Christopher's Inn – Increasing Admissions

St. Christopher's Inn is a temporary homeless shelter for men, and a chemical dependency treatment program. The Inn is the oldest freestanding shelter in New York State, and is preparing to celebrate its centennial in 2009. In 2003, prior to integrating the NIATx process improvement principles, St. Christopher's Inn had a 92% occupancy rate, with 52% of shelter clients entering treatment. As the Inn doesn't get paid for men who stay in shelter, the goal was to incorporate changes that would increase the number of men who entered our chemical dependency treatment program, and treatment billable units of service. In addition, St. Christopher's Inn started an evening outpatient program in 2003 that had generated only 100 billable units of service that year, making the ability to maintain the service, which was open to the community, impossible. Below are some of the change projects conducted by St. Christopher's Inn from 2004 through 2008, and the improvements noted.

Change Projects:

- 1) *Target Union/Private Insurance Referrals*: One of the earliest change projects was to market union referrals. Inviting union EAP's to a luncheon, St. Christopher's Inn opened new doors and opportunities. Shortly after this luncheon, the Inn signed a contract with a major union, opening the door to 10,000 of its union members. Since that time, St. Christopher's Inn staff has been invited to numerous union functions, including being asked to present numerous times at an annual national conference attended by 500 union EAP's from all across the nation. One of the latest changes, occurring in 2007 was to target private insurance companies to become in-network enabling the Inn to negotiate better payment rates in treatment. The result improved 4-year average of approximately a 7% private insurance payer mix, to 12% in 2007. Thus far in 2008, securing more managed care contracts has resulted in an average payer mix of 15%.
- 2) *Targeted Marketing Brochures*: The idea behind the targeted marketing brochure was to create a method to market providers in a more personal way. In addition to a traditional "stock" brochure, the targeted marketing brochure is customizable to meet the needs of the provider being marketed. It is simply done on the computer, and includes a section entitled "Why Program Name would make a referral to St. Christopher's Inn". Below is a list of interchangeable reasons why it would make sense for a given program to work with the Inn. For example, by stating to a shelter in New York City that we help clients apply for Medicaid, they may be more likely to refer. Other programs may be more interested in the ability to treat co-occurring clients. The brochure includes a client success story that hits home to referents that are more impacted by a heart-warming story. It also includes longitudinal outcome studies that are frequently updated, and plants a seed in the referents head that St. Christopher's Inn has a track record of success, and the referent can feel confident that when they refer to the Inn, that the client is in capable hands, and has an excellent chance to succeed.
- 3) *Exposing Shelter Clients to Treatment Services*: Baseline data indicated that approximately 50% of shelter residents were interested in participating in treatment. By allowing shelter residents to attend morning community meetings, they would have the opportunity to witness treatment clients graduate and complete the program. The results

of this change indicated that there was a 30% increase in clients desire to enter treatment. For other programs, this might tie in to the benefits of holding orientation groups prior to beginning treatment.

- 4) *Identifying Old and New Referral Sources:* Utilization of referral logs help to identify changes in trends in referrals. A sudden drop in referral sources would send a flag to the admissions department that targeted marketing may need to take place to an old referral source. Perhaps it indicates a turnover in staff from a referral source that needs to be familiarized with the program St. Christopher's Inn has to offer. Being open to new referral sources can lead to increases in treatment admissions. In 2004, a halfway house was identified as a promising market to target for treatment admissions. By establishing this new relationship, and creative programming, St. Christopher's Inn was able to generate over an additional \$100,000 per year. In 2005, St. Christopher's Inn utilized its relationship with the New York State Division of Parole, to secure a new contract that has generated an additional \$110,000 per year by allowing Parole to utilize 5 beds at the Inn to house and treat Parolees. Finally, in 2008, St. Christopher's Inn again identified a potential referral source in another halfway house in the area, which has recently begun, and is projected to initially generate an additional \$50,000 by the end of the year.
- 5) *Evening Program Improvement:* As previously stated, generating 100 units of service in a year could not cover the costs of running a program. One change project that impacted the units of service significantly and opened the doors to new referral sources was to add a night to the program from 2-3 evenings per week. This change opened the doors specifically to the criminal justice system as they liked the increased intensity in the program. In the first year of this change, admissions to the program increased 48%. There was an increase of 688 billable units of service. In 2008 the evening program is on pace to admit 46 people into the program and is on pace to have 1,718 billable units of service.

Summary and Bottom Line

Since 2003, there has been approximately a 10% increase in the number of shelter residents who entered the shelter at St. Christopher's Inn that have gone on to enter treatment. By engaging in multiple NIATx change projects, the units of service have continued to rise. See below:

| 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 26635 | 31489 | 34046 | 35600 | 36889 |

In addition, St. Christopher's Inn has generated an additional \$1,400,000 in revenue since beginning to incorporate NIATx change principles. Small changes *do* make a big difference!