

## Vanguard Services Unlimited

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Vanguard Services has provided substance abuse treatment for over 40 years to the Virginia, Maryland, and Washington, DC metro area. Vanguard offers programs specific to adolescents for residential and outpatient, adult mixed-gender for residential and outpatient, programs specific to men, and a special program for women with children.

### USING A “WELCOME COMMITTEE” TO IMPROVE CONTINUATION

**Change Leader:** Kevin Doyle, [kdoyle@vanguardservices.org](mailto:kdoyle@vanguardservices.org)

**Team Members:** J. Bulach, R. Williams, L Williams, Y. Brown, M. Briggs, F. Hillebert, J Castrillo, and P. Gunning

**Location:** Phoenix Program

**Level of Care:** Adult residential

**Population:** All new clients

**Aim Addressed:** Increase continuation rate

**Start Date:** October 19, 2005

**Project Status:** Sustained as of December 6, 2005

### GOALS AND MEASURES

The Vanguard Change Team discovered that 11% of our monthly admissions left within the first 14 days. Attributing this attrition to new clients' feelings of disorientation, anxiety, and reluctance to commit to treatment, the Change Team considered ways to encourage and support new clients, with the overall goal of increasing continuation rates. A key variable we measured and tracked was the decrease in the number of unplanned discharges as a percentage of monthly admits.

### CHANGES IMPLEMENTED

In order to help a new client adjust to the facility, schedule, and new environment, the Change Team chose to institute a Welcome Committee. The Welcome Committee spent the first three days with the new client to introduce them to other clients, help them get acclimated to the facility, and explain the daily schedule. As part of the orientation process, the Welcome Committee was charged with emphasizing that Phoenix is a place where clients can recover.

The Committee consisted of three members selected by the residential supervisor, taking into consideration diversity in gender, ethnicity, and payor source to match well with new clients. Members on the Welcome Committee rotated every two weeks.

Specific activities of the Welcome Committee include:

- Greeting the new client at the earliest possible time during the admissions procedure to help the new client meet the community and make him or her feel comfortable in the new environment

- Explaining the daily schedule and the rationale for the way things are done to the new client
- Eating meals with new clients at a special table with a table cloth and a flower arrangement with a welcome sign

To provide additional recognition for new clients, staff made a poster that listed the names and welcomed all new clients.

### IMPACT AND LESSONS LEARNED

- As seen in the chart below, baseline data for continuation show that 11% of the monthly admissions were unplanned discharges within the first 14 days. After implementing the Welcome Committee, only 6% of the clients admitted during the next four months left within the first 14 days of treatment.



- An increase in the number of clients who complete the first 14 days of treatment has a significant financial impact. For clients who make it through the first 14 days of treatment, the average length of stay is 45 days. The agency is reimbursed an average of \$200 per client per day (based on public and private reimbursement rates); by ensuring clients stay in treatment for the first 14 days, the agency effectively extends their stay to 45 days. For each of these clients kept in treatment for the first two weeks, the agency can anticipate revenue of \$9,000 (\$200 X 45 days).
- The residential supervisor found that, after a few months, clients lost sight of the purpose of the Welcome Committee and now provides a handout to give to each new Committee member to explain the purpose and give ideas on how to assist the new client adjust to treatment.