

Practice #13: A Public Health Nurse Working in a Community Service Centre Who Ensures the Referral of Seniors to Appropriate Resources (Ontario)

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This practice contributes to improving:

- Interinstitutional coordination, liaison and integration mechanisms.

The organization implementing this practice:

Ottawa Public Health and the Vanier Community Service Centre, Ottawa.

The information contained in this file was mainly acquired from a telephone interview conducted on August 3, 2017, with Barra Thiom, Community Developer. It was complemented by documentary research, and these sources are cited as references.

Background

The Vanier Community Service Centre (CSC Vanier)¹ is located near two subsidized facilities for low-income autonomous seniors in the City of Ottawa's Vanier neighbourhood (see practice #12). Both residences house a majority of Francophone seniors. This population quickly became a target for CSC Vanier service providers. A partnership was launched with Ottawa Community Housing (OCH), owners of the facilities² and the resident committees of both facilities. Since they are not long-term-care institutions, the facilities do not offer healthcare services. This factor, combined with the considerable isolation among residents that was observed by community centre staff, confirmed the need for an intervention specifically designed for this population.³

Coincidentally, Ottawa Public Health implemented a program where community nurses worked full time in community service centres across Ottawa. This physical proximity contributed to the ability to combine emerging findings in the community (isolation and lack of services) to the expertise of a nurse, leading to the design of a structure that ensured the delivery of services to residents.⁴ As a result, through Lunch and Chats (a practice developed in collaboration with the public health nurse), it was possible to reach residents in their living environment where they could share a meal in a welcoming atmosphere (see practice # 12), to better identify their health and social services needs.

Objectives

This program, funded by Ottawa Public Health, enabled the deployment of a nurse at CSC Vanier. She was responsible for identifying seniors' needs and referring them to the services they required.

1 Vanier community Service Center, accessed on July 20, 2017, at: <http://www.cscvanier.com/en>

2 Ottawa Community Housing. Accessed on July 20, 2017, at: <http://ochfoundation.ca/partners/ottawa-community-housing/>

3 Laniel, M-E. (2012). *Enabling Occupation among Isolated Seniors*. Final Report Prepared for the Vanier Community Service Center (VCSC).

4 Ibid.

Features of the Practice

Along with CSC Vanier's psychosocial service providers (see practice #12), the public health nurse used Lunch and Chats to reach out to residents in their living environment and to share a meal in a warm atmosphere, while addressing any concerns seniors may have about their health. Consequently, the nurse could assist in managing medications and in referring individuals to relevant health services according to the care they needed, with a view to reducing unnecessary visits to hospital emergency services.

Nurses are currently redeployed elsewhere and are no longer physically present in community service centres.

Challenges

The main challenge for community resource centres who wished to carry on the practice in their neighbourhood was funding the position of a community health nurse. In fact, following the redeployment, community service centres did not have the financial means to pay for the nurses' services which were previously fully funded by Ottawa Public Health.

Analysis⁵

Why is this practice considered innovative?

Needs were identified by Ottawa Public Health at the time of program implementation and relied on a solid evidence base. Community stakeholders also recognize the importance of having a nurse assigned to the community and the innovative nature of the practice.

Emerging, Promising or Leading: An Emerging Practice

- **Quality of evidence:** This initiative has not been formally evaluated. However, recipients, providers, and partners found it efficient and relevant.
- **Impact:** Community actors recognize that this practice has positive impacts on healthcare system performance by breaking down isolation, informing and supporting seniors to enhance their quality of life. The nurse's role enabled the referral of seniors so they could benefit from individualized follow-up at the Vanier Community Service Centre, or referral to necessary services; thanks to appropriate resource utilization, these interventions fostered better monitoring of seniors' health status.
- **Applicability:** The practice is no longer implemented in community service centres. However, the Primary Care Outreach to Seniors program was set up in community health centres.
- **Transferability:** Transferability was somewhat demonstrated since public health nurses were deployed in 13 community health centres.

⁵ This analysis is based on criteria defined in the *Innovative Practices Evaluation Framework* designed by the Health Council of Canada, available at: https://healthcouncilcanada.ca/files/IP_Framework_Eng_final_1.pdf also outlined in Appendix 1.