

South Carolina Hospital Association

■ *best practice report*

AccessHealth Spartanburg - A Strategy for Continued Client Engagement



Background

Clients who are motivated to play an active role in their care throughout enrollment in an AccessHealth SC network have a unique opportunity to become individuals who are empowered to advocate for their wellbeing during enrollment and after graduation from a network. Efforts to educate and empower also help to encourage appropriate utilization. When working with clients to encourage, educate and empower, providing an incentive can foster continued engagement that is critical for success. Staff at AccessHealth Spartanburg have successfully implemented an effort to provide their clients with a tangible incentive in exchange for continuing to play an active role in their care.

Thinking Proactively

AccessHealth Spartanburg, AHS, has been able to leverage invaluable resources, to the benefit of their program and clients, through a strong partnership with the United Way of the Piedmont, UWP. As a UWP supported organization in Spartanburg County, AHS has benefitted from using the Gifts-in-Kind, GIK, Warehouse to provide non-perishable items, such as cleaning products and personal care items, to clients as incentive for continuing to be involved in their care coordination. AHS director, Carey Rothschild sees immense benefit in providing this incentive to clients-“Our clients have needs beyond their medical care and providing this (goods from the Gifts-in-Kind warehouse) is a small way that we can try to meet those needs and encourage them to communicate with us.”

The Gifts-in-Kind warehouse opened in north Spartanburg in 2009 as a partnership between Exel Logistics and UWP. Exel Logistics purchased the warehouse which processes returned and damaged goods from major retail outlets in the southeast. The UWP operates

the warehouse, providing two full-time staff members and coordinating volunteer groups and the distribution of goods to member agencies. Deliveries arrive on a daily basis and are then unpacked and sorted, per manufacturer's guidelines, by volunteers. Agencies that are members of GIK can schedule times to shop, once per week, Monday through Thursday for thirty minutes each visit. During their shopping time, agencies can gather as many items from the warehouse as they need. Carey speaks to the intention behind utilizing GIK products as an incentive, noting that the resource is something AHS will hopefully always be able to provide. "We wanted to provide something that we would consistently have access to. I think it is just as important for us to be consistent with our clients as it is for them to consistently advocate for their care."

Since becoming a member of the Gifts-in-Kind warehouse in 2010, AHS has distributed more than \$156,500 in goods to their clients. Items consist of anything from household cleaning products to men's and women's toiletries, and they are sorted by category into large bins in a storage room clients refer to as 'the closet'. This process allows for an easier experience for clients, staff, and volunteers who accompany clients while they shop. Before shopping in the closet, clients sign an agreement stating that they will use the goods they receive for the benefit of themselves and their families and not exchange them for money, services, or other goods. Clients select a certain number of items each time they shop and what clients select is recorded by the accompanying staff or volunteer. On average, clients receive \$48 worth of goods each time they shop. Staff calculates the value of the items each client receives using current national averages for product categories. Clients are allowed to shop in the closet after completing their initial enrollment appointments and monthly goal update appointments, and also receive items

from the closet after home health visits. During monthly goal updates, clients report to care navigators about the progress they've made in managing their health; staff ask specific questions about appointments and referrals that were made and provide a platform for clients to share any barriers they have encountered while trying to prioritize their health. Carey remarks, "I think it encourages responsibility; clients are motivated by the promise of shopping in the closet to be proactive in scheduling monthly goal update appointments with us or welcoming us for a home health visit."

AHS client Sharon G. knows shopping in the closet has helped her on her road to better health. Sharon has overcome many emotional barriers through conversations with AHS Care Navigator Lisa Caldwell-Salters during goal update appointments, which she said she scheduled because of the opportunity to shop. "It has helped with my overall health and wellbeing-I've been motivated to talk with staff and create a plan to overcome barriers that were keeping me from being healthy," said Sharon. She expressed just how much she has needed what she has been able to get through GIK, "..Everything I've gotten from there (the GIK closet) I've needed. Especially toilet paper, paper towels, trash bags, and tooth paste. You don't really know what it is like to run out of those things until it happens."

Steps for Action

AHS first director, Rebecca Parrish, prioritized establishing a partnership with the GIK center in AHS' infancy. Rebecca knew of the Center's reputation in the community as an invaluable resource for non-profits and moved swiftly in securing membership. To qualify for membership and utilize GIK, agencies must have tax exemption status, be governed by a volunteer board, provide a service that addresses the needs of the ill, needy,

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youth or otherwise disadvantaged, and remain in good standing with membership and usage fees. Membership is limited to 175 agencies that pay a \$500 (if located in Spartanburg, Union, or Cherokee Counties) or \$600 (if located outside of the three county area) annual membership fee. There is currently a waiting list for membership; agencies are placed on the list according to the date their application was received and will learn the following September if their application has been accepted. Spots for new agencies are made available when current agencies decide not to renew their membership in September. Each time a member agency schedules a shopping appointment, the member is charged a \$15 usage fee; agencies that are located more than 55 miles from the GIK warehouse can choose to shop twice per month for one hour and pay a \$30 usage fee each time.

Those interested in GIK membership can contact Beth Vandever, Volunteer and Membership Coordinator, at bvandever@uwpiedmont.org or (864)814-3129.

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