

Using Your Network: Building a Team to Educate Consumers About Quality

Background:

- Three out of five (60 percent) adults in Western New York are overweight or obese.
- The rate of death from heart disease is higher in Western New York than the rate in New York State, New York City or the United States.
- Recent research of patients in Western New York shows that many people do not get the recommended care they need to manage conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure.

Idea:

The P² Collaborative recognized a need to build a web of community-based support for patients and their families to assist them in managing their chronic conditions and health care. A Consumer Engagement Associate (CEA) program was developed to help engage patients and their families across Western New York.

Action:

The Collaborative worked with its rural health network to identify and recruit CEAs who have the appropriate background for the position and were very familiar with their local communities.

CEAs identify and work with community leaders to:

1. Become a Patient Empowerment Trainer,
2. Improve their constituents' knowledge of health care by placing articles on health care quality in organizations' communications mechanisms, such as Web sites and newsletters, and
3. Implement the Stanford Chronic Disease Self Management Model by training leaders in the organization who can offer workshops to help people with chronic disease manage their conditions more effectively.





Resources Needed:

- Training materials
- Patient resources
- Team motivator to build excitement and understand the big picture

Results:

- Three CEAs have been hired to test the model (two rural and one in the city of Buffalo), with the goal of hiring eight (one for each county in the region).
- More than 75 advocates have been recruited across the three communities.
- Message competency of CEAs increased following participation in message training session.

Advice:

- Identify and select people best suited to do the work.
- Clarify goals and expectations because ambiguity means failure.
- Adopt a team approach so no one is isolated.
- Do not get caught up in the process.
- Remain flexible, since it can be confusing to not work directly with patients and to lack clarity about the role of recruited advocates.

