

Lean Events



THE CONCEPT:

Facilitating Lean Events to streamline processes, reduce costs, improve efficiency, enhance service quality, and support overall system and operational excellence.

AWARD WINNING:

Mental Health Center of Denver was the 2009 Golden Abacus Award winner from the Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council, for a submission regarding Lean Process Improvement in Outpatient Healthcare.

The RICE (Rapid Improvement Capacity Expansion) Project was an opportunity to describe how lean principles could be successfully applied to mental health care. The outcome of the project was also impressive—effective solutions to serve more consumers through improved appointment “show” rates, without increasing staff or money expenditures.

CONTACT US:

Mental Health Center of Denver
Research Institute
4141 E. Dickenson Pl
Denver, CO 80222
research.institute@mhcd.org

The term “lean” refers to focusing on waste reduction, so as to consume fewer resources and deliver superior results. Originally developed in manufacturing, its principles have been successfully applied to projects in hospitals—to solve systematic problems for improving patient care by reducing errors and waiting times, reducing costs, enhancing interdepartmental interaction, and improving employee satisfaction. Inspired by these lean techniques that saved millions of dollars for hospitals, we began applying them in 2008 to outpatient behavioral health care.

We have conducted nine Lean Events for our organization, prompted by a variety of agency needs and stakeholder requests. Consistent to each though, was the employment of lean principles like value stream mapping and gap analysis. This simplicity and applicability for diverse problem solving is making Lean Events more popular than Six Sigma as quality improvement tools.

We have held Lean Events on a variety of projects—one also included developing a more rapid intake process to promote faster service access for targeted populations. Not only did it result in statistically significant decrease in average intake time, the percentage of intakes completed in 2 hours or less increased from 67.5% to 75%.

RICE Project Results:

Analysis of 1,726 intake appointments (for one year before, and one full year after the lean project), yielded this data:

- 27% increase in service capacity
- 12% reduction of intake no-show rates (14% to 2%)
- Capacity increase to serve 187 additional people with no increased staff or expenses
- 93 fewer no-shows for intake appointments during the first full year of RICE Improved operations.

Another project resulted in a comprehensive electronic Personnel Action Notice system that not only ensures more accuracy, but provides an opportunity for grant-funding tracking, new employee equipment requisitions, and linking the Learning Management System based on job placement.

Where could your system reduce “waste”, ensure compliance, improve efficiency, and leverage information from data collection?

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