

The Link in Linkage: Strategies for Strengthening Linkage to Care and Partner Services

Adapting Traditional Clinic
Partner Services Linkage to
Community Based
Organizations



How We Got To The Table

Staff struggling to transition from asking “what” to “who”

Staff largely unsuccessful at partner elicitation activities

No method of tracking successful linkage or methods to PS

ASA committed to the value of Partner Services in continuum of client care

Staff capacity to adequately prepare clients for engagement as natural component of linkage process needed improvement

Rapport developed with clients identified as opportunity to de-stigmatize Partner Services

Battling Common Misperceptions



Simple Pre-Implementation

- Key ASA Department Leadership and City of Austin DIS & Surveillance Staff met to clarify timelines, goals, and discuss options for strengthening linkage
- During discussion, new strategy emerged to adapt traditional clinic linkage practices to CBO environment capitalizing on social network principles
- ASA Testing Team trained in new procedure and integrated 3-point introduction to Partner Services in testing sessions
- DIS Team attended Testing Team Meeting
- Ongoing, consistent communication about all referred cases

Minor Adjustments...

DIS/Partner Services

- Reset when the clock started ticking
- Communicate reconfiguration with Surveillance
- Committing staff to scheduled interview times up to 2 weeks prior

ASA

- Greater temporary investment in training and prompting staff
- Integrated prompts about PS linkage at 3 points: obtaining consent, setting confirmatory appointment, and orientation to follow up process
- Providing appropriate notice to DIS

Setting the Stage for Client Engagement

- Be integrated frequently.

“At your follow up appointment, you’ll have a chance to talk to someone about options for talking to your partners and getting connected with a doctor.”

- Be descriptive.

“You’ll receive a call from someone about Partner Services. They can help you talk to your partners. Many clients find it useful to learn what PS has to offer.”

- Be familiar.

“I’m going to invite Ruben to join us in a few minutes to discuss Partner Services and how you can talk to your partners.”



Obstacle Illusions

Hurdle

- DIS staff identified inefficient use of time if arriving at schedule confirmatory appointment time
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- Clients did not attend confirmatory appointment and couldn't be interviewed by PS
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- Unknown obstacles...

Busted!

- DIS staff arrived 15 minutes after appointment to allow RRS time for result delivery and follow up activities
- Came to agreement on case-by-case basis about next steps in DIS follow up
- Ongoing, consistent communication was preventative and key to success

Evaluating Efficacy

- Maintain descriptive records about all client contact and linkage activities
- Systematically review client records to identify barriers to timely and appropriate linkage
- Record informal client feedback
- Modify client satisfaction surveys to include linkage activities, if possible
- Ongoing, consistent communication with local DIS is key for timely response to challenges

How We All Won

DIS/Partner Services

- Reduction in time, resources, and money spent locating clients
- Ability to meet timeline
- Improved interactions with clients
- Ease and quality of information gathered improved

ASA

- Improved linkage and documentation of success
- Greater staff comfort and engagement in linkage role
- Rapport developed by RRS supports transition to service “experts” in familiar environment

How We All Won

Shared Agency

- Improved relationship with community partner
- Normalizes and reinforces PS linkage as part of follow up process
- Coordinated linkage more responsive to individual client circumstances
- Being evaluated as design for DIS partnership with other testing agencies

Client & Community

- Service linkage more appropriate for and considerate of individual circumstances
- Decreased anxiety about participation
- Mediates negative perception about Partner Services
- Allows for greater engagement overall in spectrum of services

Recommendations for Strengthening Relationships with Linkage Partners

- Quality First!
- Get to Know One Another
- Start 'Em Off Strong
- Be Imaginative
- Work Smart, Not Hard
- If it isn't Written Down, it Didn't Happen

Thank You!

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