



Case Study

Community Health Center Realizes Benefits from Web-Based Event Management

Moses Lake Community Health Center (MLCHC) in Moses Lake, Washington is a Federally Qualified Health Center. MLCHC is the safety net provider for the 87,000 residents of Grant County, including more than 34,000 migrant and seasonal farm workers. In addition, MLCHC provides patient care under contracts for the federally funded Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC) for Washington State.

MLCHC operates at two main sites with one on-site pharmacy. The organization has 243 FTEs and in 2010 provided primary medical care, dental care and obstetrical care to nearly 28,000 patients in their catchment area and another 27,000 WIC patients in five locations.

Kathleen Thompson, RN is Quality Improvement Director for MLCHC. Kathleen attended a conference and was introduced to a product called the **Healthcare SafetyZone® Portal** (Portal), a web-based and fully customizable event management tool. She thought that using an electronic tool like this one might benefit MLCHC and the patients that it serves.

What were the Goals of Implementing the Portal?

Kathleen had some specific goals in mind for MLCHC when considering a change from their manual event management systems:

- Reduce the amount of paper that was being used to capture event information
- Recoup the time it took to re-enter information from the paper form into a spreadsheet for follow-up
- Eliminate the loss of information as papers sometimes went missing
- Decrease the time it took to gather and review information
- Find a way to decrease the delay that sometimes occurred between an event and the actions taken to prevent future events

With these goals in mind, Kathleen, along with Shirley Merkle, RN, Deputy Director of MLCHC began to work with Clarity Group, Inc. and implemented the Portal for MLCHC.

What is entered into the Portal?

The data collected by the Portal is categorized by Unusual Event Reports and Patient Complaint Reports. MLCHC also uses the Portal to collect Patient Compliments. MLCHC has been using the Portal for about 12 months and has a total of 688 events entered into the system from all of its sites including Pharmacy. As Kathleen describes it, “We are collecting every kind of complaint from patients and visitors, risk management issues related to patient care and the environment of care. The staff finds it so much easier to submit event information that we have seen an increase in reporting and an increase in the amount of information we obtain on any one event.”

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Patient Complaint• Patient Compliment• Patient Satisfaction Survey | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unusual Event, e.g.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Infection Control○ Medication/Prescriptions○ Employee Injury○ Environment of Care○ Patient/Visitor Injury |
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What Benefits are MLCHC Experiencing?

The benefits of using the Portal begins with the data that is gathered, but it becomes powerful when you can aggregate data and drill down to contributing factors. “Our ability to have actionable data right from the Portal analysis has been one of the key benefits of changing to this system. In addition, our supervisors can access the data as they need it, which has enhanced their effectiveness to work with staff in real time to make necessary changes in their departments,” continues Kathleen.

The Executive Team of the organization has also experienced some benefits from the Portal. First, it is very easy to review data by department, site or organizationally on a weekly or monthly basis. It also provides real time data on the timely follow up to safety issues. “I really appreciate the ability to view real time data and run my own reports instead of waiting for a quarterly report. It is nice to see as much detail as I want on any incident in the Portal,” reports Shirley Merkle, RN, Deputy Director.

One key area of impact has been in working with Medical Staff. The Portal sends notifications of events to key people at the time of submission. This has increased the Medical Director’s awareness of issues and has increased his understanding of potential problem areas. As a result, he encourages all the clinicians who work at MLCHC to enter adverse events into the Portal to help ensure that clinical issues can be addressed. Peer Review is now being done based on Portal events and the staff’s immediate access to real time data is enriching the whole process.

Pharmacy was one of the first proponents of the Portal system. Kathleen notes, “Minor prescription errors were not reported in the old paper system so we were unaware of the magnitude of

the problem.” In addition, MLCHC is uncovering some issues that they might not have known about with their prior paper system. As Kathleen also states, “When an event occurs, you begin to look for others that might have occurred but weren’t reported and that raises awareness about the underlying issues that might be contributing to the event. It is this sort of internal transparency that we need to steadily improve the care we provide.” The data from the Portal points to poorly performing processes and supports the improvement teams’ efforts to redesign those processes.

So how about Meeting Kathleen’s Goals for MLCHC?

In terms of meeting Kathleen’s original goals, she reports that, “With the reduction in paper, increased reporting, enhanced information and actionable data, along with the time savings realized, the Portal has more than met our initial goals. In addition, the fact that the follow-up area is visible to all who need to complete a portion of the investigation enables the investigation to be completed more quickly and has eliminated the manual handoff of going supervisor to supervisor for their input.”

Additional Benefits

Some additional benefits have come from being able to meet certain requirements in the State of Washington that provides MLCHC protection from discovery in the case of a medical malpractice allegation. To obtain this protection, it is necessary to have a Coordinated Quality Improvement Program that demonstrates how data is collected, how events are reviewed and what actions are taken. The Portal has helped MLCHC to meet this requirement as well as supported its efforts in obtaining grants to further the work of MLCHC.

Results realized by MLCHC with the use of the *Healthcare SafetyZone*[®] Portal:

- Accelerates process improvement for enhanced patient care and satisfaction
- Increases efficiency and quality of data collection across all sites
- Places real time information in the hands of frontline supervisors
- Enables more complete follow-up in less time
- Eliminates the paper processes and hand to hand passing of the event that delayed action
- Provides more in-depth analysis to get to contributing factors that could be addressed systematically
- Helps meet state requirements and supported grant procurement

For more information on how your organization can benefit from the *Healthcare SafetyZone*[®] Portal, please visit our website at www.claritygrp.com or call us at 773-864-8280.



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