

Alberta Association of Colleges and Technical Institutes  
Innovation Secretariat  
c/o Olds College  
Room 350, 4500-50<sup>th</sup> Street  
Olds, Alberta T4H 1R6

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October 1, 2012

Dear Bruce,

The final outcomes report of the "Mental Health Education Support for Healthcare Front-line Workers in a Rural Continuing Care Setting" is attached, submission reference number RIN-NQ01. The grant was a wonderful opportunity to explore strategies to address the education needs of frontline workers.

Please also find attached the detailed claim form and final invoice.

Sincerely,



Dr. Craig Hart  
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September 28, 2012

## 1. Project Description

The "Mental Health Education Support for Healthcare Frontline Workers" pilot project was a collaborative effort between staff at NorQuest College and the Good Samaritan Society and involved a faculty member from the University of Alberta. The collaborators for this project sought to determine if a delivery model consisting of focus groups, workshops, and implementing a 'site champion' is an effective method to help continuing care frontline staff in improving their management of behaviours associated with mental health diagnoses.

### Focus Groups

The project members undertook two focus groups to identify the challenges that frontline staff are experiencing when caring for clients with mental health diagnoses. The focus group sessions gave participants opportunities to share examples of mental health challenges with clients and identify needs and desired learning strategies for workshop content. The focus group facilitators sought to identify the challenges and stresses that staff experience when attempting to manage behaviours exhibited by clients with mental health diagnoses. They also sought to determine the level of staff awareness and insight into the predictive signs of escalation in behavior. Finally, they sought to determine the participants' current and required skills necessary for managing challenging behaviours and beneficial training approaches.

### Workshops

Following the focus groups, the project team developed and presented a 2-day customized training workshop for frontline staff. The facilitators customized the workshop based upon feedback from the focus groups, a literature review, and best practices for managing challenging responsive behaviors associated with mental health conditions. The workshop content was based upon the participants' prior knowledge and experience and was also designed to meet the participants' learning level and style. The workshops addressed mental health issues as opposed to behaviours associated with dementia and the training drew from elements of current training models including PIECES, U-FIRST, Supportive Pathways, Montessori for dementia, sensory modulation techniques and non-violent crisis intervention. The workshops sought to offer a framework focused on the person, disease, environment, and supports. The workshops also sought to assist participants to conceptualize and connect themes and topics included in the training program. The workshop included effective and appropriate communication strategies to manage interactions with clients and sought to help participants be aware of aspects of situations that are within the caregiver's control and those that are not. The workshop also touched on care planning, team building, and self-awareness.

The two workshop facilitators were multi-disciplinary professionals (psychiatric nursing and occupational therapy) and they employed multi-modal training techniques (didactic, interactive, and experiential) and learning exercises to build on and enhance the participants' knowledge.

The specific learning outcomes for the workshops were as follows:

- Identification of the unique characteristics of the continuing care client with a mental health diagnosis
- Identification of aspects of a clients' backgrounds that may contribute to the exhibition of challenging behaviours
- Explain the pathology of common mental health diagnoses
- Explain the signs and symptoms of common mental health diagnoses

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- Describe a therapeutic or safe environment as it relates to the mental health diagnosis
- Describe the elements of an effective care team working with clients who have a mental health diagnosis
- Explain how the attitudes, values, actions and knowledge level of staff can impact the behaviour of clients with a mental health diagnosis

### Site Champion

The third component of the pilot project was to train and implement a site champion. During the summer months, a project team member held weekly consultations with a site champion to provide advice and recommendations that was aimed at addressing the needs of the workshop participants. The facility director selected a regulated health professional (LPN - Nurse Manager) to assume the role of a site champion. This individual attended the 2-day training workshop with the other participants and acted as a consultant to front line staff around the management of client challenging behaviours during the summer months.

### *2. Collaborators and Roles*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>
Erin Bampton, Principal, Centre for Excellence in Continuing Care, NorQuest College.	Focus group facilitator (initial)
Sharleen Ravensborg, Chair, Health Care Aide Program, NorQuest College.	Focus group facilitator (initial and final), training program developer, workshop facilitator, consultant for site champion
Lorraine Reeves, Director of Education Services, Good Samaritan Society.	Site manager
Dr. Suzette Brémault-Phillips, Professor, Occupational Therapy, University of Alberta	Training program developer, workshop facilitator, focus group facilitator (final)
Dr. Craig Hart, Head, Applied Research, NorQuest College.	Applied research support

### *3. Findings*

To determine the effectiveness of the three-pronged delivery model, the project team completed a follow-up survey. Team members also conducted a follow-up focus group with the workshop participants. While the frontline caregivers and the project team members rated the effectiveness of the focus groups, workshops, and site champion as high, the pilot design did not allow for rigorous pre- and post-project data gathering to objectively indicate that the components made a significant impact on managing behaviors arising from mental health issues. However, the workshop participants offered several anecdotal commentaries on how the overall project served to increase their understanding of and sensitivity to the person with mental health conditions, helped to diffuse their fear and stigma associated with mental health conditions, increased their knowledge and understanding of various mental health conditions (mood, psychotic, cognitive, personality disorders), increased their awareness of delirium, and increased their awareness of the need to identify early and intervene early for best management of client care.

### Focus Groups

The team determined that focus groups are an effective means to gather information about the challenges that frontline caregivers are experiencing and, in turn, provide valuable information

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for designing the workshops. The project team members learned that the focus groups were effective to the overall project because they solicited input from a group of staff members who are normally only given directions as opposed to being asked to contribute to care planning. This had an incredible impact of building rapport between the participants and the facilitators. The focus groups were also effective in providing the workshops facilitators with insight into the types of challenges that the participants experience due to behaviors exhibited by clients with mental health diagnoses. These behaviors include threats and abuse and provided insight into the timing and location where those behaviours escalated. The focus groups also helped the facilitators understand the participants' level of awareness and insight into predictive signs of escalation in behaviour, and to understand the participants' current and required skills necessary for managing challenging behaviours. The focus groups helped to contrast the skills between professional and front line staff. Finally, the focus groups helped the facilitators to identify the training approaches that would be most beneficial for the participants in a workshop setting.

### Workshops

The workshop participants indicated that the workshop content was highly relevant to them and that the focus groups helped to create a strong sense of rapport with the presenters in advance of the workshops. The participants rated the efficacy of the workshop 8.2 out of 10 (with 0 being ineffective and 10 being significantly effective). The presenters found that they quickly established rapport with frontline workers because of a previous connection in the focus group setting, their credibility, and their prior knowledge and experience. The facilitators indicated that the experiential learning model was very effective in enabling participants to learn, apply and integrate new knowledge. They also indicated that immersing the participants in a content rich learning environment that was customized to their particular learning needs, knowledge level, and learning styles facilitated their knowledge acquisition.

### Site Champion

The project team determined that the site champion may require more training than this project provided and that he or she could be more effective if he or she also has prior experience in mental health education. The effectiveness of the site champion was limited, in part, because of a difficulty in scheduling telephone conferences with the facilitator over the summer months. The site champion's limited prior training in mental health conditions and related behaviours affected her ability to effectively translate the information from the consultant to the frontline staff. In future delivery models, the site champion will require more intensive training in order to build the skill set and the individual selected should have a prior background and experience in mental health education and consultation. There was outpatient staff at the facility for the community mental health unit who had higher level skills than the frontline staff. These individuals were untapped by this project and are a potential resource for site champions in a different model.

While all of the project team members and frontline caregiver participants rated the components of this project as highly effective, they also identified factors related and unrelated to the focus groups, workshops, and site champion that may have negated some of the project's effectiveness. For example, team members and participants indicated that the project's short timeline may have diminished its effectiveness and that providing training just prior to the time most frontline caregivers were set to take summer holidays may have had an impact. They also indicated that the physical distance between some members of the project team and the participants may have diminished the impact. Another identified issue was a lack of

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opportunities for participants to observe others utilizing the skills and the lack of opportunity to practice within the work environment as potential negative impacts. The participants' limited baseline knowledge about mental health issues and their pre-conceived biases and myths regarding mental health diagnoses means that future workshops should seek to address this in more detail.

#### *4. Impact on Continuing Care Community and Education Environment*

This project met an identified need for training of frontline workers in managing challenging behaviours of clients due to mental health issues. All of the project team members and the participants agreed that managing behaviors arising from mental health issues in continuing care settings is a growing phenomena and that more needs to be done to address it. The participants in this pilot project gained much needed knowledge, strategies and tools to prevent and manage behavioural reactions of client's with mental health diagnoses. The project also identified a critical need for a permanent mental health challenges site champion position within continuing care facilities who would be equipped to work with the frontline staff caring for this client population.

#### *5. Next steps*

The research conducted in this project supports the need for further development of a training model and program that can be offered to staff across the continuum of care. In a future project, gathering quantitative data from the frontline staff (such as behavioural logs) will assist the project team in capturing the actual experiences of front line staff when managing challenging behaviours. Participants in a future project design would benefit from a practice component which is vital for modeling and learning skills. In addition, more extended training and local oversight for the site champion will assist in the translation of information from the workshop to the delivery of care for the clients. Practice sessions supervised by an experienced consultant would be beneficial for both the site champion and frontline staff. Post-training data that captures the type of client behaviours and the effect of specific staff interventions employed would also help to substantiate and ground the research.

Project Leader Contact Information  
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