CLEAR 2012 Annual Educational Conference
“i just don’t want this to happen to anyone else”: Effective Management of Consumer Complaints

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Session Goals
• Addressing consumer complaints
• Complaints Backlog: key learning
• Innovations for managing complaints + enhancing public confidence
• Dialogue with regulatory colleagues

Background
• Public Protection and Confidence: the Social Contract
• Define terms: Complaint + Report
• Legislation: The Regulated Health Professions Act
"I just don’t want this to happen to anyone else": Effective Management of Consumer Complaints

Complaints: a story

Consumer Complaints: A cautionary tale

...and they all lived happily ever after.
Once upon a time

Our Original Approach

Business Process Redesign

- Incremental change leads to paradigm shift
- Make at least one thing better, not other things worse
- Produce more value for your stakeholders
- Don’t lose sight of your purpose
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iClicker Question: Do you have a backlog?

- Yes, it is very l o n g
- Yes, but it is manageable
- Not currently, but we have in the past
- No, but employees have large caseloads
- Never

Business improvements

- Centralize the backlog
- Improve flow of work
- ADR first!
- Increase focus on what’s unique about complaints

Interventions: a retrospective
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Intervention: 1.0

- Small focused team
- Stickers on files
- Can’t investigate everything. ADR!!!
- Letters to consumers: from the ED, apology for delay, changing process, ADR

Intervention 2.0

- An even smaller group
- More stickers on files

Intervention 3.0

- Re-assessed all files
- Criteria for a complaint - if not engaged, why push forward?
- Letter: apologize, changes to legislation, if you wish to continue contact the Board
Key lessons

- No single right approach
- Acknowledge challenges and apologize
- Attend to feedback from stakeholders
- Greater transparency
- Data review

The Backlog or The Queue

What the public say

- Timeliness

- Accountability

- “I just don’t want this to happen to anyone else”
A letter of complaint

Although this has been a very difficult letter for me to write, as it naturally brings back all the terrifying events of that night, I feel that this last step is very important to complete. I feel strongly that she was negligent of her duties as a nurse that night and did conform to the purpose of this formal complaint to do my part to make sure that is made well aware that her conduct as a nurse that night was unprofessional and that her neglect potentially resulted in further risk to my daughter’s life.

iClicker Question:
Are the stories you hear from the public similar or different?

- That is exactly what we hear
- Close, but they are mostly conciliatory
- Close, but they are looking more for punishment (revoke!)
- No, our complainants only want to tell what happened then move on
- No clear theme from consumers

What members of the profession say

- “The Shock of Accountability”
- Reflect on performance
  - To improve
  - To meet professional standards
  - Specific and general
## Question

- How have your licensees reflected their professional accountabilities in your process?

## Innovation

**(practical strategies)**

- Complaints intake (communication)
- Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)
- Staff engagement and training
- Timely, adequate and reasonable investigations
Complaints Intake

- Establish a dedicated complaints intake
- Early contact
- Develop approach and clear message
- Risk Assessment
- A Complaint = 5 point criteria
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ADR

- Legislation - a formal process
- Review of standards
- Reflection
- Terms: Meet with Manager
- Facility resolution

Meet with Manager

- Evidence informed
- Facilitated reflection
- Stakeholder feedback

ADR: Meet with Manager

Therapeutic Nurse-Client Relationships

As a nurse, I am aware that the therapeutic relationship premise standard is at the core of the nurse-client relationship.

When presented with an extremely challenging client, I can be triggered. I will keep this standard in the forefront of my mind as a result of this incident. I have come to recognize my behavior and will in the future utilize various techniques such as, be aware of my feelings, advance communication with client, take ten steps back, walk away if necessary and utilize other team members for support.

Upon reviewing this standard, I will ensure that my professional behavior and actions will meet the needs of my client.
ADR: Facility Resolution

- Systems issues
- Broad accountability + reflection
- Feedback from stakeholders

Staff Engagement

- On-going training and support
- Clear goals and expectations
- Director: “30 by December 2011”

How creative are we talking?

- Key is to find the boundaries
  - Legislation
  - Resources
  - Other legal constraints
  - Public perception
Question

- What innovation has your organization developed that addressed your volume issue and sustained consumer confidence in your processes?

Effective Management?

Do these processes:

- Protect the public
- Maintain confidence in self-regulation
- Model a principled approach to regulation and the accountability of those regulated

Evidence of Effectiveness

Qualitative:

- Professionals
- Consumers
**Evidence of Effectiveness**

**Quantitative:**

- **ADR agreements:** 125
  - Meet with Member: 42
  - Facility Resolution: 14

- **Complaints to Reports:** 47

**BIG FINISH**

**Public Complaints Queue 04/09 - 11/11**

- # of cases in queue
- Oldest by # of weeks from receipt
- Average time in queue by weeks

**Next Steps**

- Vigilance
- Stakeholder feedback:
  - Complaints survey
  - Members of the public + profession
  - Tools to support reflection
- LeSage Report for Ontario College of Teachers
Final Thoughts

- It's not easy to take my problems one at a time when they refuse to get in line. - Ashleigh Brilliant

- Experience is that marvelous thing that enables you to recognize a mistake when you make it again. - Franklin P. Jones

Questions

Speaker Contact Information

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