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Sienna Searles

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Improving Awareness of Transportation Services in Lamoille County

SIENNA SEARLES

STOWE FAMILY PRACTICE

ROTATION #1: APRIL 2019

PRECEPTOR: DR. KATHERINE MARVIN

Problem Identification and Description of Need

- ▶ Transportation barriers to healthcare disproportionately affect individuals with low socioeconomic status, who often carry a high burden of chronic disease (1).
- ▶ Travel burden can significantly impact treatment-seeking behaviors for acute and chronic conditions (2).
- ▶ Residents of rural communities are more likely to die from heart disease, cancer, unintentional injury, chronic lower respiratory disease, and stroke compared to individuals in urban areas (3).
- ▶ Bottom line: People living in rural communities have a higher burden of chronic disease and have more barriers to reaching a medical office for consistent care. Many patients are not aware of the resources that exist in order to overcome these barriers.
- ▶ **There are transportation options available, but not all of them are well known to patients. This project sought to increase patient and provider awareness of transportation options in Lamoille County.**

Public Health Cost and Unique Community Considerations

- ▶ In 2015, 6.7% of Lamoille County residents reported that their health and wellness was inhibited by lack of transportation options (4).
- ▶ Residents of Lamoille County have a higher than average rate of living in a household without an automobile compared to other Vermont residents (5).
- ▶ Lamoille County has a higher than average rate of transportation barriers compared to the rest of the state. As previously noted, this has significant public health implications. Given that there are options, it is critical that patients know what resources are in place, and that providers know who to contact in order to help maximize resource utilization.

Community Perspective and Support for Project

Members of Stowe Family Practice Nursing Staff

- Expressed support for the project, noting that they are aware of several patients who hitchhike to the office, spending all day getting to and from their healthcare visits because they do not have reliable transportation.

Lamoille County Transportation Services Staff

- Reports that RCT is a good option for residents who are eligible. Before Obamacare, many people were not eligible for this service. Now, fewer people are falling through the cracks and get their transportation services covered, but it is still a work in progress.

Care Coordinator, Lamoille County

- Supported the idea of this project, especially since it gives individuals the tools they need to help vocalize their transportation difficulties and get support.

Intervention and Methodology

- ▶ Interviewed nursing staff, social workers, and physicians in order to understand where gaps were for patients navigating transportation barriers to medical appointments
- ▶ Many of these gaps were cited to be related to lack of knowledge (by patients and staff) of all the resources available.
- ▶ This handout was created and was placed in the waiting room of Stowe Family Practice, and it was also posted in all of the patient rooms.

Need a Ride to a Medical Appointment?

If you have **Medicaid**, Rural Community Transport (RCT) offers FREE transport to the medical appointments for eligible individuals. Call 802-888-6200 to learn more and schedule a ride!

- You must call at least two business days in advance of your appointment to be guaranteed a ride.

If you have **Medicare**, you can get FREE rides for medical appointments and shopping trips. Call 802-748-8170 to learn more and schedule your rides!

- You must call at least two business days in advance of your appointment in order to be guaranteed a ride.

If you don't qualify for the programs above, there are **special programs** that exist to make sure you can get to your appointments. Call your doctor's office and ask for a care coordinator to learn more! (Stowe Family Practice: 802-253-4853, Morrisville Family Practice: 802-888-5639)

Public Transportation Options (Ranges from \$1.00-\$2.00 per ride): The 103 Shuttle stops right at Stowe Family Practice and goes between here and the Price Chopper in Morrisville. The 100 Route 100 Commuter goes between the Price Chopper in Morrisville and the Waterbury Park and Ride. You can connect to the 103 Shopping Shuttle from some of these stops in order to get dropped off here at Stowe Family Practice. Other route options can be found at: <http://ridegmt.com/trip-planner/>

Results/Responses

- ▶ The handout was met with support by staff at Stowe Family Practice. Providers expressed gratitude that these options were available, and that patients could take a tangible reminder of transportation options home with them after a visit.
- ▶ Stowe Family Practice staff reported that a visual aid for patients and providers was a quick and easy way to start a discussion regarding transportation barriers

Evaluation of Effectiveness and Limitations

- ▶ Effectiveness:
 - ▶ Removing a potential barrier for patients is likely to increase acute and chronic care visits to their primary health provider's office. This could be measured by a decrease in the number of missed appointments, or an increase in overall appointments made.
- ▶ Limitations:
 - ▶ This intervention did not directly assess the immediate impact on the patient population or the organizations involved in providing transportation services.

Recommendations for Future Interventions

- ▶ Conduct a patient survey within Stowe Family Practice to identify whether transportation needs are being met by the services that are currently available
- ▶ Work with Community Health Team in Lamoille County to study patient awareness of social services in the community
- ▶ Work with Green Mountain Transportation (GMT) to identify challenges around increasing their public transportation options in rural Vermont

References

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