

Report from Home Support Department

Submitted by Diana Hill, Home Support Director

The Home Support Department is in year four of its five year contract with the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority and we have been operating very smoothly. Over the past four years we have achieved very admirable results with our performance metrics and have successfully received maximum funding every quarter since the inception of the contract. We believe we are the only one of five contracted agencies that has achieved such consistent results which is testament to the quality of care provided by our Community Health Workers out in the community as well as the quality of service provided by the Supervisory, Nursing and Program Assistant staff. The team has worked diligently and tirelessly to uphold the department's reputation in the community and with our clients and community partners.

April 2009 brought some changes to the reporting requirements for our performance indicators. Indeed, several of the targets were increased causing the department to reevaluate its processes and look more closely at our ability to continue to exceed our targets. In most cases, we were already achieving more than the required outcome so that stretch was not too difficult. In a few other areas there was more cause for concern simply because the client continuity and the cluster care measures are more challenging measures to manage and/or control. Still, we make an effort to monitor them monthly and keep track of our progress during the quarter so that we would not be unduly surprised at the end of the quarter.

Home Support continues to accept 100% of referrals that are offered, including those with nursing delegations. Our hours continue to increase steadily and since 2005, there has been an annual increase of about 5% each year. We provide an average of about 33,500 hours per month but in June of this year, we actually provided over 34,500 hours in the month; more than we had ever provided before.

We also continue to match trained workers with our dementia and palliative clients regularly so that the competency targets are easily able to be exceeded. The trainings for these courses have been reduced as many of the staff has been trained through our internal programs over the years but we have also investigated the amount

of study in these areas that our new employees are coming to us with and are able to qualify them as competent shortly after they are hired.

Client continuity over a 3-month period is a measure that is important to our clients and can indirectly affect our satisfaction scores if the clients have too many workers visiting on a regular basis. The idea is to minimize the number of workers going in to manage the quality and consistency of care. This can become difficult as we attempt to manage the Supervisor's workloads internally when readjusting the geographical boundaries which depend on client numbers in each area. But, knowing the importance to us of the measure and its associated funding, we make the changes to ensure as little disruption as possible to the clients.

Cluster care is an area that we have managed well over the last few years as well. We started with 5 clusters and have grown to have 19 clusters in our primary areas and 1 cluster that is not in our primary area. In April of 2009, the targets for this measure were changed and now each contracted agency has an individual target that is required by VCH. Ours went from 30% to 45% and we were given a 3-month period in which to reach this target. So, with our 19 clusters, the total number of clients clustered is 45% of our total contracted client numbers excluding palliative care clients. Due to the lack of density in our primary geographic areas, it is difficult for us to create large clusters. So, in order to manage the target of 45%, we must create more and smaller clusters. In addition to these 19 clusters, there are three more clusters being prepared for development which will give us a bit of a safety net in terms of meeting this quarterly metric.

Client and Clinician Satisfaction Survey scores are the measure that VCH calculates and reports. They send out the surveys and reports on the responses to us on a quarterly basis. Our results on both client and clinician satisfaction surveys have always been excellent and the clinicians have an unusually high response rate which indicates that because they feel good about the quality of service we are providing, they take the necessary time to complete the survey. This indicator used to be

measured semi-annually (although it is calculated quarterly) but it was changed in April 2009 to be measured annually. Luckily at that time, we had exceeded the necessary target and so this measure will in no way affect our funding through to the end of March 2010. However, if in this year we do not maintain such a satisfaction score, our funding will be negatively affected every quarter for the remainder of our contract. We continue to do our best to ensure quality care for our clients and good working relationships with our partners in the community.

As we move forward into the second half of the fiscal year, the Home Support Department will continue to manage our performance targets while attempting to create efficiencies in any way possible. Due to the loss of the HandyDart contract, the required budget cuts within the health authority and our contract being up for renewal next year, it is of significant importance to maximize efficiencies. As such, we have already embarked on a major restructuring of the department. The desired deliverables expected as a result of this restructuring are:

- Increased continuity of care for clients
- Decreased training for nurses
- Decreased discrepancies in payroll
- Decreased travel time paid to workers
- Decreased OT paid to workers
- Scheduling two weeks in advance
- Maximizing regular worker's hours
- Creating a pool of casual workers from which to draw
- Increased workload measurement of Supervisors

We moved all Supervisors into one large room at the beginning of June so that they can work together and problem solve more as a team and with more time savings which contributes to better satisfaction for our clients and employees. One Supervisor has been designated to

complete all initial visits for new referral clients and will complete investigations and incidents as necessary. One Supervisor manages all cluster clients, one Supervisor manages all Cantonese-speaking clients and one Supervisor continues to take all new referrals, manage timesheets and vacation approvals as well as schedule for the Palliative Care and Level One clients. The other two remaining Supervisors, schedule and manage employees and clients for the rest of the city, dividing it along 12th Avenue as the nurses similarly divide their responsibilities. The team has adapted well overall but change takes time and it appears that more time is needed to realize our efficiencies and reach the desired outcomes. But we will continue to monitor our performance and efficiencies regularly going forward.

We continue to maintain a healthy working relationship with our partners in the community and with our designated health units, problem solving cooperatively as is required. Plans are being made to have regular meetings with the health units to ensure open communication and an understanding of each other's roles. GVCSS will be hosting all Evergreen Community Health Unit Case Managers and other liaison personnel in September for an education session/meet and greet as there are new staff to meet and introduce.

Our main goal for the rest of this year is to ensure operations continue to run smoothly while adjusting to the reorganization of the department. We are looking into options for using technology to our benefit to increase some efficiency and help with some of our processes, particularly to do with scheduling and payroll. We are also looking at how best to increase our private services as well as our contracted services with DVA, ICBC and Worksafe BC. This is all to be accomplished while we keep up with our quality of service and reputation.

