G019
Enhancing service access for seniors through effective use of technology with service providers - Improving Partnerships Sharing Information to Improve Services to Older Adults

Summary

- In the province, over 5000 seniors and 4000 adults with disabilities receive in-home supports. It has been noted that Social Development (SD) and agency staff are spending a lot of time on administrative tasks, which is an inefficient use of time and resources.
- Administrative tasks need to be streamlined to improve the efficiency (i.e., timely delivery of care) and effectiveness (i.e., quality delivery of care) of staff.
- SD and its partners designed a new digital tool to identify approved service providers (matching) and confirm service requests (service requisitioning).
- The tool aims to simplify administrative tasks and improve the quality of information shared to enhance care for people receiving home supports. This will enable staff to spend more time on clinical tasks and providing direct support.
- Research Questions: (1) Can a digital solution reduce the time taken to confirm services and improve the quality of information shared to improve care of people receiving in home supports. (2) Can this solution be scaled to other service types (e.g., Meals on Wheels, foot care).
- 20 agencies and 15 SD staff members contributed to the program's design.
- 5 home support agencies and 2 social workers participated in the pilot testing of the new digital tool.

HSPP Focus Area	Using supportive technologies to foster healthy aging at home
Project Start & End Date	March 16, 2023-March 31, 2024
Organization/Agency	Department of Social Development
Location	New Brunswick Province
Principal Investigator(s)	Wendy MacDermott

Indicator	Impact / Outcome / Result
Reduced administrative burden	- With the new tool, Agency and SD staff indicated spending much less time securing services for clients. - According to the 26 staff who digitally tracked their time spent on processing client requests, time spent on these tasks decreased from approximately 25 minutes to approximately 8.5 minutes. This ranged from 60 minutes for the initial 2 requisitions to 5 minutes for the subsequent ones with the exception of 1 that took 20 minutes. - Participants noted improvement in the quality of information shared about service requests. - All participants reported that they benefited from seeing both active and pending service requests and automatic record updates when the primary SD contact changed. - Of a sample of 12 service providers, 9 (75%) said they received the information they needed to accept or decline the request, and 7 (58%) reported that fewer follow-ups about service requests were required, which reduced the amount of time needed to set up and accept service requests. - Compared to the old tool (where at least 2 follow-ups were required), 83% of requests filed with the new tool did not require any follow-ups.
Increased satisfaction	Overall, participants from the 5 agencies agreed that the new tool was faster, easier, better at identifying available services, provided more accurate and helpful information, and provided a transparent way to send or receive requisitions.

Indicator	Impact / Outcome / Result
Return on Investment (ROI)	• According to an analysis conducted by Opportunities NB, this tool provided a total savings of 191 days of full-time work of requesting home support services over a period of 9 months (January – September 2023). • This results in $183,00 savings for agencies and $202,000 savings for SD staff.

Methods and Comparison

Data was collected from participant surveys, self-reported time spent on administrative tasks, and focus groups. Considering the time constraints of the pilot project, historical client data was used instead of engaging real clients (seniors requiring home support services) to avoid delay.

Conclusions and Lessons Learned

- With this new digital matching/service requisitioning tool, it is easier to identify approved service providers and confirm service requests digitally, thereby streamlining the process and making it more efficient.
- The new tool contributes to substantial time savings, which can be reallocated to direct patient care.
- The digital tool reduces the number of follow-ups required and provides better quality information about available services.
- Overall, staff are highly satisfied with the tool and, after being trained, the staff can conduct their task with more ease and fewer hurdles, thus reducing administrative burden.
- The tool and the associated processes are simple and user friendly. Both small and big agencies with limited digital capability are interested in launching the tool.
- Enthusiasm and strong positive support enabled accelerated scale-up to all home support agencies and other service types (e.g., attendant care, meals on wheels).

Recommendations

- Expand the project with other service partners in different areas.
- Engage service providers and agencies in the pilot testing of early concepts and secure change management resource and change management training plan for agencies.

Next Steps

- The tool has been modified based on the recommendations from the pilot project. The new system will enable monitoring to identify further improvements.
- The next stage of scaling is already underway. In the first level of scaling, a training program will be implemented by August 2024 with participating service providers and SD staff.
- Additional service provider partners (for example Meals on Wheels, Attendant Care, Foot Care) will be 'on boarded' over the next 18 months.

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