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PROMISING PRACTICES



COPE bridges the data gap in opioid treatment outcomes

By Khalid Al-Maskari, Health Information Management Systems, COPE Community Services, Inc.

The integration of behavioral health and primary healthcare records can be critical in the delivery of quality services to persons who are receiving medication-assisted treatment for their opioid dependence and addiction.

[COPE Community Services](#) serves more than 600 opioid treatment clients from its facility in central Tucson, Arizona. Care coordination at COPE involves many facets, and one of the most important is the ability of case managers to access clients' old paper records in a searchable format using COPE's electronic health information management system.

COPE's health information management system provides web-based access to a client's health history and opioid treatment plans. Case managers and other clinical staff can log on to a portal to manage their clients' treatment needs and monitor their progress.

"COPE is commended for the development and use of an electronic patient records system that is sophisticated and comprehensive, integrating behavioral healthcare and primary care documentation," a recent [CARF](#) survey report observed.

The survey report elaborated, "COPE's electronic service record incorporates old records in a searchable format and provides adequate protections to ensure continued system integrity and

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required confidentiality. Data collected through the system are used to support information management and performance improvement activities.”

The health information management system was developed with suggestions from clinical staff members to eliminate redundancies and improve clinical efficiency. Linda Kapinos, a psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner at COPE, uses the system daily to manage the complex symptomatology of her clients.

“Many of the clients that I work with benefit directly from a behavioral health and disease management perspective,” Kapinos said. “We’re able to decrease the likelihood of medication errors, compare our clients’ vitals over time, and have the ability to view progress notes from COPE case management staff from past encounters. The bottom line is many positive outcomes for our methadone clients.”

COPE’s health information management system has demonstrated quantifiable results in improving the quality of life for the organization’s opioid clients. To date:

- COPE routinely collects, analyzes, and uses data, including client surveys and input from other key stakeholders, to improve its services and business practices. The data collected are used to support information management and performance improvement activities by staff.
- Opioid treatment staff members were evaluated for program knowledge and trained to use the system. Each staff member attended trainings to assess their competency levels and increase their knowledge.
- The system provides controls over the adverse effects of opioid medications, leading to fewer medical errors. The software also provides a big-picture view for treatment and continuity of care, allowing for managing a client’s overall behavioral health through case management, counseling, groups, and methadone treatment.

Through access to meaningful data that can be used by providers across the healthcare spectrum—as well as the ability to bridge the gap between paper and electronic files—the numbers of successful treatment outcomes at COPE have increased. The CARF survey report said COPE’s health information management system fostered “improved services to the community, the organization, and the persons served. The vision and leadership that drive the formulation, development, and implementation of this system are exemplary and ensure appropriate guidance to those who use it.”

For more information, contact Tania Capin, COPE Community Services, Inc., at (520) 792-3293 or



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tcapin@copecommunityservices.org. The COPE Community
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