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PROMISING PRACTICES



Color-coded dosing benefits clients and the community

The growing demand for methadone services nationally has led to an unwelcome challenge locally: communities are coping with increases in loitering and crime near the methadone clinics.

In 2009, administrators of [Therapeutic Health Services](#) (THS) grappled with ways to serve greater numbers of clients and yet remain a responsible and responsive member of the community. One of the THS branches sits in the middle of a mixed residential and business neighborhood in urban Seattle. Neighbors were alarmed by a rise in traffic and vagrancy in the area.

Initially, THS assigned staff members to monitor parking lots and respond to complaints from nearby businesses and residents.

That's when one of the clinic's clients suggested establishing color-coded dosing times. She had heard that several east coast clinics dose clients only by appointment.

THS agreed with the suggestion and discussed several options for implementation. Ultimately, THS created a color-coded system to efficiently dose individuals throughout the day.

A color corresponds to a daily time slot that is assigned to each client. Time slots range from 30 to 90 minutes, depending on the number of persons scheduled during the assigned time.

THS clients like the scheduled dosing times because the lines and wait times are shorter. Moreover, clients can now receive counseling immediately before or after dosing and do not need to return for a later counseling session if their schedule changes

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because of employment, school, or other appointments.

Color-coded dosing also allowed THS to group clients' dosing times according to their geographical home location or their work location. This has resulted in savings of time, energy, logistics, and costs for transportation providers that transport clients to and from the clinic.

The negative impacts on the community have been drastically reduced. Complaints about traffic volume and reports of drug deals, client loitering, and thefts at nearby businesses have dropped to an all-time low.

Color-coded dosing has enhanced THS's level of quality customer service, and the community's and neighborhood's perceptions of the clinic and its clients have substantially improved.

For more information about Therapeutic Health Services, please contact Patricia Edmond-Quinn, chief clinical officer, at PatriciaEQ@THS-WA.org.

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