June 2012
TLC Recruitment Winner
VA Northern California Health Care System

HPDP Program Manager Cynthia Wold credits preparation and some "cheerleading" for the success of TLC at the VA Northern California HCS, which won the TLC recruitment competition in June with a 36-percent increase in enrolled Veterans. "I worked with Dr. Lorrie Strohecker, a primary care physician and our VISN HPDP lead, and Dr. Jeffrey Cass, our HBC and MI and PACT lead, to develop a launch plan for the program," she explains. "That plan provided the framework for the collaboration and promotion that have helped make the TLC pilot a success here."

Empowerment

And the HCS has not been the only winner. Veterans are telling Wold how much TLC has helped them change their lives and get healthier. "Our patients are typically working on multiple goals with their health coaches, but losing weight is the most common one," she says. "I've talked to several of our graduates and they say that TLC is a success because it's really empowered them to better manage their health and continue the lifestyle improvements they've initiated."

The program has also empowered Wold in her interactions with clinicians at both the HCS' remote clinics and main facility located in Mather, which is near Sacramento. "TLC has helped me develop direct relationships with primary care providers for whom I don't provide clinical services, which has been a big plus," she says. "Working with me on TLC also has helped them understand what I do, what HPDP is, and how it can help Veterans."

Motivation

Wold explains that the marketing and informational campaign for TLC initially targeted Rural Health, then expanded to the other CBOCs. "I went out to field sites with a PowerPoint and educational materials and met with local staff members," she says. "We discussed their needs, as well as the multiple benefits that TLC could provide in terms of time, resources, and patient care." Starting TLC sub-consults in January 2012, the Mather team rolled out the program first at the smaller Chico and Redding CBOCs, and later at the larger facilities. Post-launch, Wold has maintained relationships with points-of-contact at each site by calling or meeting with them as-needed, and periodically distributing encouragement, as well as the updates and information on TLC that are provided by NCP.

Acknowledgment

Wold's cheerleading efforts for TLC have extended to the facility's consistently high clinician-referrers, too. In late May 2012, she personally thanked these primary care providers for their great referral work—a recognition that she believes "provided acknowledgment and added motivation that likely helped boost TLC enrollment." One such clinician who was recognized was psychiatrist Dr. Julie Young, who is embedded in primary care and, as a primary contact for TLC, has been a key program proponent.

Now over half a year into the pilot, Wold says that providers are realizing how great a resource TLC is, even if they probably haven't yet seen all of its benefits to VHA care. "We're all so focused on completing the pilot that we've yet to step back and start to quantify its value," she explains. "But as we continue to get more experience with and results from TLC, I know that the positive impacts for both Veterans and staff will be even more apparent and far-reaching."