



Fletcher Group Lessons Learned

SMART COMES HOME

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ON THE FRONT LINE

The SMART Recovery Life Skills Curriculum has proven effective in many different applications and locations, but was still relatively new to recovery homes in America until the Elevance Health Foundation partnered with the Fletcher Group to launch a bold new initiative in July of 2022. "We were on the front line with many lessons to learn," says Fletcher Group Administrator Michelle Day. "We had to learn how to find the homes, talk to them, teach them, staff them, implement the program, and then document the results. Lots of steep learning curves and heavy lifting, but in the end it was all well worth it."



WHERE ARE THEY?

Many recovery homes don't provide the life skills training that's so critical to recovery. So what could possibly get in the way of a proven program offered at no cost together with a \$1,200 stipend? "The biggest hurdle," says Day, "was just finding them. Because the industry is unregulated and fragmented, with no database to work from, we were on our own. We combed every possible resource and steadily got better at tracking them, but there are thousands that remain under the radar."

U THOUGHT WHAT?

"We thought we'd just say 'SMART Recovery' and off we'd go," says Day. "But some people were turned off because of negative things they'd heard about SMART. Day learned to start initial conversations with the well-known benefits of life skills training. The specific provider might come up later, but only after the overwhelming value of a no-cost offer and \$1,200 stipend had time to sink in. "That eliminated the 'hard no' and let us focus on the training which everyone seemed genuinely interested in."

LESS IS MORE

"I used to start by saying, 'This program does this and this and this,' says Day. "But if you throw too much at recovery home operators you'll lose them. That's because they've already got so much on their plate. The last thing they need is a pushy salesperson taking their time when they've got none to spare. I learned to give them just enough information to want more. Dangle the carrot—a free program plus stipend—just enough to spark their interest and warrant a follow-up phone call when they'll have the time and energy to hear you out and go into more detail."





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ENDLESS ADAPTATION

What Day learned about approaching clients also applied to follow-up. "Part of our agreement with recovery home operators is that they complete an outcomes survey before receiving the stipend," says Day. But the problem was the survey itself. It was too long, complicated, and time-consuming for harried recovery home operators to deal with. "We learned to keep the survey short and sweet," says Day. "There were also some anomalies to deal with—a Spanish-speaking only recovery home and some homes that had no wi-fi which meant that hard copies had to be mailed, filled out, and mailed back."



SILO BARRIERS

It's said that non-profits should collaborate more to maximize their impact. But that may be one of those things easier said than done. Define roles, responsibilities, and objectives all you want, says Day, but how efficient can you be when you never see one another, come from different cultures, answer to different managers, and may even be incentivised differently, for example paid vs. volunteer? "Of course, we should all work seamlessly and selflessly together," says Day. "But my advice is make sure you're well-stocked with coffee, patience, and perseverance. You're going to need it."

PROVING IT

Though it's a key driver in the adoption of any new best practice, documentation is not always top of mind at a busy recovery home. In other words, getting operators to honor their pledge to document outcomes was not exactly a walk in the park. The relentless persistence of Day and Fletcher Group researchers Robin Thompson and Grace Clancey eventually paid off, however, with some very impressive numbers: 83% of participants saying the training increased their recovery knowledge, 82% still using the life skills they learned, and 87% eagerly recommending the training to others.

GIVE OR TEACH?

Is it better to give someone a fish or teach them to catch their own? "We did both," says Day, "with no-cost training delivered upfront followed by documentation and the certification as facilitators of all graduates so they can spread the benefits to others. The key was the ability to adapt. If we hadn't been able to take a hard look at ourselves, admit what wasn't working, and make the necessary adjustments—many of which were pretty big—this initiative would never have succeeded."

