

For Immediate Release

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Smiddy's Closet Opens for UVA Wise Students

Provides business attire for interviews and jobs

WISE, Va.—The University of Virginia's College at Wise celebrated the grand opening of Smiddy's Closet with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Feb. 19 at 1 p.m. The closet, a business clothing resource for UVA Wise students, is located at the Wesley Foundation, across the street from the college.

The Wesley Foundation partnered with the College's Department of Career Discovery and Planning to plan and implement Smiddy's Closet. Cash-strapped students who need professional attire for job interviews, formal presentations and jobs may have one complete outfit per academic year. The clothes are theirs to keep.

Chancellor Donna Henry addressed a crowd that included students, alumni, faculty, staff and members of the community. "No student should ever decline an interview because they feel unequipped or unprepared to present his or her best self to a prospective employer," Henry said. "Smiddy's Closet is about empowerment. It is about easing doubt. It is about instilling confidence."

Reverend Beth Tipton, the co-founder of Smiddy's Closet spoke. "The right clothing can make the right impression, and the wrong clothing can break your opportunity," Tipton said. "Smiddy's Closet provides the means to make the right impression."

Smiddy's Closet collected its initial inventory through a clothing drive. Individuals and businesses donated gently used or new clothes, as well as monetary contributions. Interested parties may make donations by contacting Neva Bryan, director of Career Discovery and Planning, at careerdiscovery@uvawise.edu or Rev. Beth Tipton at btipton@uvawise.edu.

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**Creating Communication
to Address Workplace Change:
The Case for PACE**

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Abstract

The understanding and cooperation of all Appalachian Agency for Senior Citizens (AASC) employees is vital to the success of its PACE program (AllCARE for Seniors). It incorporates the services provided by each AASC department. Establishing better communications channels between senior-level management and the workforce will reduce employee resistance to change and create buy-in for AllCARE. Communication processes will include traditional modes (memos, e-mails, newsletters) and new efforts, including “town-hall” type meetings and other face-to-face approaches. My qualifications to address this problem include my role as the director of public relations and internal company relations and my communication experience in a wide array of industries.

Statement of Problem

Background

PACE (Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly) is an innovative managed care benefit for frail seniors. The PACE provider receives a monthly payment (a lump sum from Medicare and Medicaid or private pay) to care for the PACE participant’s care. This capitated payment through different funding streams is a unique feature of PACE.

The PACE program features comprehensive medical and social services that use an interdisciplinary team approach in an adult day health center. The day service is supplemented by in-home and referral services in accordance with the client’s needs.

To participate in PACE, individuals must meet the following criteria:

- be age 55 or older;
- be certified by the state to receive a nursing home level of care; and
- live in the PACE organization’s service area.

PACE services include all Medicare and Medicaid services but are not limited to them. The organization must provide at least 16 additional services, including medications, “primary care services, social services, restorative therapies, personal care, and

supportive services, nutritional counseling, recreational therapy, and meals.” (PACE Fact Sheet)

In the mid-1990s, the Appalachian Agency for Senior Citizens (AASC) executive director began researching the feasibility of operating a PACE program in its service area. She and a team of agency managers concluded that AASC had the expertise, organizational structure, and desire to make the program work in Southwest Virginia.

The agency moved forward through a series of on-site reviews and applications. In 2006, AASC received state and federal funding to begin a rural PACE program. It is one of only fifteen in the nation. AASC’s program, AllCARE for Seniors, serves Buchanan, Dickenson, Russell, and Tazewell counties.

Problem

AllCARE for Seniors is one of the most significant and most complex initiatives ever attempted by AASC. When the top-tier leaders first explored the possibility of implementing a PACE program, they confined their discussions to team meetings with departmental directors. As the agency moved forward in the process, the directors shared the organization’s direction and PACE start-up details with second-tier managers. Unfortunately, those details only filtered down to lower-level employees via informal channels.

As a result, some employees do not fully understand or support the implementation of the program. This is evident in the negative comments expressed by employees in meetings and personal conversations. It also reveals itself through employees’ lack of desire to learn about the PACE program.

AllCARE will use AASC’s transportation, adult day care, in-home care, nutrition services, care coordinators, case managers, fiscal department, and public relations department. The cooperation of all AASC employees is necessary for the implementation of PACE.

A complete understanding of the program's services by AASC employees is also necessary for AllCARE to fulfill its enrollment projections. The program expects to enroll at least 144 participants by the end of 2012. While the PACE program will use various marketing methods to promote the program, the primary means of recruiting enrollees will be word-of-mouth. AASC's in-home care workers (homemakers, certified nursing assistants, nurses), transit drivers, care coordinators, and other employees who work closely with the frail elderly daily are expected to tell them and their caregivers about AllCARE. To do this well, they will need to be fully informed about all aspects of the program.

Purpose

The purpose of this proposal is to shed light on how sporadic unclear management-to-employee communication has resulted in a lack of understanding regarding AllCARE for Seniors and employee resentment of the program. This proposal also explores solutions to diminish resistance to change and cultivate employee buy-in.

Expenses

As the sponsor of AllCARE for Seniors, AASC will subsidize the program until it becomes self-sustaining. This involves significant risk for AASC, as the agency must have a specific cash flow and risk reserve amount. (92, Trice) Also, AASC must have appropriate liability insurances and certifications. The agency has also invested in large-scale renovations of one wing of the central office building to convert it into the PACE center of operations and clinic. Finally, current AASC employees are dually utilized, performing some PACE duties in addition to their typical job requirements.

In 2006, the average Medicaid capitation payment to PACE programs was \$2,971 per participant per month. The Medicare Part D payment was \$550 per participant per month. AASC has \$500,000 in federal funding and \$250,000 in state funding to establish AllCARE for Seniors.

AASC's PACE program needs as many enrollees as possible to get on its feet and stay there. Unfortunately, the smaller the number of participants, the more the cost has to be spread among those few capitation payments. According to an editorial by Paul Willging in Nursing Homes Magazine, "all it takes is a few long-stay admissions to a nursing facility, at an average annual cost of more than \$60,000, to demolish [the PACE] business plan and court financial disaster."

Poor understanding of AllCARE for Seniors, accompanied by resentment, can directly impact the program's success. Without enthusiastic promotion by AASC's employees, the AllCARE will not meet its enrollment projections.

Sources of Information

The research process included the following steps:

1. Reading about PACE and best practices in communication;
2. searching online resources;
3. interviewing experts;
4. evaluating the data; and
5. conducting face-to-face discussions with AASC employees.

The PACE Fact Sheet, published by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, is helpful for its broad approach to understanding PACE's critical aspects. This document highlights a PACE program's essential components, including application, eligibility, services, enrollment, payment, restraints, data collection, and quality review.

"PACE: A Model for Providing Comprehensive Healthcare for Frail Elders" by Laura Trice shows how the PACE model offers cost-effective, high-quality care to frail elders

with complex medical, functional, and social needs. The article addresses barriers to growth, an important factor in employee resistance to the PACE program.

The Chris Gay and Roger D'Aprix article, "Creating Line of Sight between Employees and Strategy," is particularly enlightening regarding how to convey changes in business strategy. Organizations must endeavor to do more than inform employees about the business strategy. Employees must understand the role they play to act in ways that assist the achievement of strategic goals. Leaders must use a collaborative approach to cultivate consistent messages that have practical meaning for employees. The organization must educate leaders on their role in the process. They can then reinforce messages to the rest of the workforce as they carry out the program. Finally, the organization must develop meaningful ways to measure success.

In "Communication and Attitudes toward Work-Related Change," Mary Vielhaber examines how certain communication variables impact attitudes toward change at work. She determines that the best predictor of attitude toward change is relationships between employees and supervisors, coworkers, and the company and all employees. This article is useful for its psychological approach; it examines human beings' inherent desire for information and the topic of job satisfaction.

"Ambivalence and Resistance: a study of management in a concertive control system," by Gregory Larson and Phillip Tompkins, is less helpful in this discussion. It finds that managers may implicitly, subtly support employee resistance. Unfortunately, much of this article's findings do not apply to the PACE problem.

“The Best Methods of Internal Communications” is a question and answer article on best practices in internal communication. It is a practical resource utilized in the *Solution* section of this report.

I interviewed the executive director of AASC, Diana Wallace, regarding employee communications. She discussed the challenges and opportunities present in change.

Solution

In her article, Mary Vielhaber reaches four important conclusions concerning work-related change:

- The most significant communication variable in explaining attitudes toward work-related change is *relationships*. (p. 10)
- Informal channels (coworkers and rumors) and *accurate information by formal channels* (managers, supervisors, leaders) are significant factors in explaining attitude toward change. (p. 11)
- How well employees accept change is reflected in their job involvement, job satisfaction, and *how much information* they receive about the change. (p. 12)
- “Information about *specific change* is crucial to employees.” (p. 13)

According to AASC Executive Director Diana Wallace, communicating change “starts with understanding the proposed program, what it is, why do we need it, how do we do it, etc. Then it must be presented as an opportunity to improve something. It may be a challenge, but it will be worth the effort.”

Chris Gay and Roger D’Aprix assert that when employees know a business’ strategy and believe in it, “they’re committed to contributing to it, and know exactly what

they need to do to help achieve it. It also means that their hearts, minds, and hands are connected to the success of the organization.” (page 27)

So what are the most effective methods for AASC to communicate the change? According to Carol Cox, senior corporate communications consultant at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida, “Responses to our annual surveys and focus groups have repeatedly shown the most effective communication approaches/tools are: face-to-face dialogues, weekly e-newsletter, e-mail, and our closed-circuit TV network.” (Bus Communicator)

To reduce employee resistance to change and create buy-in for AllCARE for Seniors, I propose enhancing our traditional communication modes (memos, e-mails, newsletters) with new approaches, including “town hall” type meetings and other face-to-face tactics. According to D’Aprix, “For employees to truly commit, they need to be able to discuss the strategy and raise suggestions, issues, and concerns in forums where they know they will be heard. There also may be opportunities for employees to get involved at the grassroots level to help drive the strategy.” (p. 28)

We can conduct our town hall meetings once a month in the central office classroom. The space is large enough to accommodate the entire staff. It is also a familiar and comforting environment where we hold our employee parties and training.

We can host the meetings during the lunch hour. Most employees welcome an occasional meal “on the house.” Bellacinos or Italian Village are popular choices for lunch at AASC, and both restaurants can handle large orders of pizza and subs.

While everyone is eating and relaxed, key AllCARE leaders can convey the program’s importance and update PACE’s status. Their comments should be succinct to

give employees time to ask questions. Leaders should not dodge any question but address every concern. Leaders must emphasize the reason for the town hall: to familiarize employees with AllCARE for Seniors, to get feedback from employees about the program, and to assure them that they, too, can take ownership of agency change.

In addition to the town hall meetings, it is vital that key actors in the change, including the director of AllCARE for Seniors and the executive director, talk with employees individually. This may be as simple as dropping by the office to chat for five minutes, discussing the program at the copier, or seeking input as they pass in the hallway.

Employees need to know that the program is not static but open to their suggestions. According to Wallace, “they must know that you’re willing to evaluate, reevaluate, and reevaluate again to make it right, knowing the whole time that management is there to support them through the transition.”

Budget

This solution will not burden the budget. Monthly town hall meetings will require nothing more than food and drink to accompany the discussion. A budget of \$5400 will suffice for an estimated 50 employees to attend twelve meetings. This cost can be split three ways, shared by AllCARE for Seniors, the AASC public relations department, and the umbrella organization, AASC.

Other face-to-face initiatives cost nothing.

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