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Jesana Denter-Eckelberg
Minnesota State University, Mankato

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MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY MANKATO

Best Practices for Implementing The Green House® Model at the Tomah Veterans Administration

Jesana Denter-Eckelberg, BS, MSW (Candidate)
MSW Student, Minnesota State University, Mankato
Academic Advisor: Nancy M. Fitzsimons, PhD, MSW, LISW, Professor
Field Liaison: Laura Benesch, MSW, LGSW
Field Instructor: Stefhanie Greenwell, MSW, LCSW & Gina Hilmanowski, MSW, APSW

Purpose

The Veterans Administration (VA) located in Tomah, WI is in the process of a cultural transformation to create an environment that is welcoming, aesthetically pleasing, and accommodating to those with special needs. One effort in this transformation is the inclusion of a new concept, The Green House® model, which is a welcomed change to the large facility that has been traditionally known as an institutional setting for treating Veterans with chronic psychiatric conditions.

The purpose of this Capstone Project was to conduct a literature review examining best practices in organizational culture and structure, employee management practices, and patient care models with an emphasis on the literature pertaining to long-term care, deinstitutionalization, and The Green House© Model. Three informational briefs were created and will be used to educate the veterans, family members, staff and other key stakeholders of the Tomah VA.

Summary of Literature Review

Important factors to consider with implementing The Green Houses® at the Tomah VA:

- Deinstitutionalization of care facilities is a largely effective and cost-efficient approach.¹
- Since the mid-1990s focus has been on cultural transformation in the delivery of care to older adults who live in nursing homes.²
- Kanter's **Theory of Structural Empowerment** during this transformation of care should be considered. In this theory, empowerment is promoted in work environments that provide their employees with access to information, resources, support, and the opportunity to learn and develop in their profession.³
- The **Wellspring Model** emphasis on care is based on the collaboration that accompanies a teamwork concept, which in turn improves the quality of life and care for residents.⁴
- Breaking down bureaucratic organizational structures and hierarchies in decision-making is the first step in creating a pleasing and satisfactory work environment for employees and will lower rates of staff turnover.⁵
- Staff consistently working with the same Veterans enhance forming of relationships, caregivers become familiar with residents needs and preferences, and staff recognize changes in health conditions. Consistency in staffing reduces employee turnover and nurses prefer it.⁵

The Green Houses® at Tomah VA



Green House® Terminology

- **Shahbaz**, similar to a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), received specialized training that emphasized on deinstitutionalization and emphasizes care on person-centered care. Sometimes referred to as universal care worker.
- **Shahbazim** is the plural form of Shahbaz
- **Guide** is the nurse working in The Green Houses©
- **Sage** is a volunteer who serves as a facilitator and role model of best patient care practices
- **Elder** refers to the older person residing and receiving care in The Green Houses©

Key Findings

Best practices in The Green House® Model include:

- Cultural transformation
- Organizational structure and empowerment of care providers
- Increasing Veteran autonomy and empowerment

Discussion

Recommendations for cultural transformation of care:

- Address the needs of the mind, body, and spirit.
- Instill Elders and employees with decision-making authority.
- Put people before tasks.
- View Elders and staff as unique individuals .
- Staff that is treated well will result in Elders that are treated well.
- Improve staff recruitment and retention by creating better working conditions.
- Installation of locks on kitchen drawers which contain sharp objects. In addition, installation of a
- Safety valve and shield on gas stove to prevent Elders from using without supervision and to trap pots safely on the stove out of reach.

References are available upon request.