

Organization Evaluation: Room in the Inn

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Introduction

The organization that we chose to focus on is Chattanooga Room in the Inn. This agency is located at 230 N. Highland Park Ave, in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The mission of this agency is “to empower women and children experiencing homelessness to become self-sufficient by offering a temporary home while providing programs and services necessary to meet their goals” (Chattanooga Room, 2019). The organization was founded on August 31, 1988 and was established because there were very few options available to single women or women with children who were homeless. A few different organizations decided that something needed to be done; therefore, they joined together to address this critical issue. As a result of the meeting, the Chattanooga Room in the Inn was born. The beginning was small and humble, but the issue was being met one bed at a time. The overnight shelter was hosted by seven different churches: Brainerd Church of Christ, Central Presbyterian Church, First Centenary United Methodist Church, First Christian Church, Hixson Church of Christ, Hixson United Methodist Church, and Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church. Eventually, in 1992, the Chattanooga Room in the Inn was ready to move into their own building. This new location provided a shelter that was open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Since then, Room in the Inn has had the privilege of assisting over 3,000 homeless women and children to become reestablished in life.

The Chattanooga Room in the Inn or commonly called Room in the Inn (CRITI), has a capacity of 32 beds and currently has 30 residences which includes both women and their children. With how many women the organization can serve, it allows the staff to sufficiently attend to helping the women manage life skills. Some of the ways they use interventions to help women manage life skills is to teach them chores to stay on top of themselves and their children, as well as not to leave their mess for others to clean up. The women there are also required to

have a job, whether it is part-time or full time, in order to save money to turn in to case managers as they save up for a new place to live. Women have weekly meetings with their case managers to discuss how they are doing and what needs to be changed. Lastly, women have to set up appointments for themselves and their children to see a psychiatrist and general doctors in order to stay at the agency.

Physical Characteristics

Having an organization such as the Chattanooga Room in the Inn provides many opportunities for those who come for support and guidance. Not only does Room in the Inn provide a safe space, but it is also around a location that allows their clients to have quick access to its surrounding community. For example, one of Room in the Inn's physical assets is the fact that they have their own building for women to stay in. Whereas some organizations have the clients to go to different places instead of the main office, women who come for help at the Room in the Inn do not have to go much farther than the first place they came.

The building is accessible to those who are handicapped. They can enter comfortably through the back of the building where there are no steps. However, parking is very limited and can be tricky to get to especially for the parking spots behind the building. This can be difficult for a person if one does not know how to get to it. Its location is easy enough to find for those without transportation. If they need to walk, it is located near a bus line for those wanting to ride public transportation.

One of the resources near the agency is Partnership for Families, Children, and Adults. There is also the Metropolitan Ministry that is not too far from the organization. One of the reasons that the Metropolitan Ministry is a great resource for the women transitioning out of the program is that they provide resources for those who need assistance with rent, utilities, and

food. The Chattanooga Room in the Inn is also located between two known hospitals, Parkridge Medical Center and Erlanger East Hospital. Having such proximity to such valuable resources can allow women who may be in danger to get assistance quickly.

Organization Overview

There are currently five employees who work at the agency. With the many volunteers and interns that come to help, there are approximately 15 people in the agency. The main group of those who help this agency to thrive are the food preparers, interns, volunteers, and corporate donors. Although this is a great organization, there are issues that prevent the organization from being more successful. Some of the issues that prevent the agency from providing the best quality services is because it is in a low-income area; it takes some time to upgrade or fix damages within the house. It also lacks funding and manpower to address the maintenance needs of the organization. Another issue that prevents the agency from providing the best quality services is that sometimes the case managers act as if the clients are a bother to them and that the women feel that the staff is unfair to them. One of the last reasons that prevent the agency from providing the best quality services is that employees feel that women do not try hard enough and do not want better for themselves.

Based on interviews and surveys given to both clients and staff, it was discovered that the poor connection between both parties is a major need that is affecting social services in the organization. By using an adapted version of the Test of Negative Social Exchange (TENSE) Scale (appendix A) and the Liking People Scale (LPS) (appendix B), we were able to see how well clients felt about the staff at Room in the Inn and how staff related to clients (Corcoran & Fisher, 2013). The information showed that clients had a high frequency of negative experiences with the staff and this affected their ability to participate in the necessary programs available to

them and their children. As for the staff, we learned that many of them did not feel that relationships and people were important, so their actions showed these beliefs, which then affected how services were provided to clients.

Intervention

Based on the information gathered before, the disconnect between staff and clients shows an issue with a real need that should be addressed. The intervention that will be implemented is a series of staff training that will focus on sensitivity and customer service. These sessions will be conducted four times within the first month of starting the intervention. This comes down to one training per week for one month. The goal of these sessions is to help staff learn how to treat clients with more dignity and respect while also giving them the tools to be assertive and compassionate. According to the initial baseline survey that was conducted with the clients and staff, many of the staff treated their clients as bothersome or as a nuisance.

With more specific training focusing on how to treat clients, co-workers, and community partners with respect, the quality of interactions between individuals should increase. What this would look like is clients being able to feel comfortable approaching a staff member without feeling as if they were going to annoy them. This would also help to empower the clients to become more self-sufficient and proactive in the program since they would be treated better. It would also foster a more caring and encouraging work environment for the staff working in the organization.

However, an unintended consequence that this intervention may have is the feeling that staff members are to blame for the present issue in the organization. This could create tension between intervention individuals and staff members, as well as between staff and clients. This could also create a divide between staff members blaming each other for one co-worker's

behavior or action. With these consequences in mind, the trainings will be administered as a learning experience rather than a corrective measure. By innovating and branding the intervention strategy differently, it could reduce the likelihood of such negative consequences.

Based on the current state of the organization, one of the potential barriers is the lack of funding to be able to conduct this training. Another barrier could be directly from the staff feeling attacked or criticized for their work and could resist the intervention strategy. While both the financial and the emotional reactions could prevent the successful implementation of this strategy, a resource available would be the community partners that the organization has. For example, one of the partners that Room in the Inn has is Partnership for Families, Children, and Adults. Due to Partnership's large resource base and access to education materials, Room in the Inn would be able to reach out to them for assistance. And with this connection, Room in the Inn would be able to ask Partnership to provide personnel or the funding to help hire the appropriate people to conduct these training sessions.

The current intervention plan will begin at the start of April 2020. A representative from Traliant, an online organization that offers free or paid training for employees and managers, will conduct the sensitivity training during the first two weeks. The next two weeks will be focused on customer service training from Dale Carnegie, another online training agency. These training sessions will be conducted via live online training sessions. At the end of the four weeks, there will be a debrief session with the staff members from Room in the Inn to discuss ways in which the training can be implemented into their daily work.

Evaluation

The main method that will evaluate the success, or the lack thereof, of this intervention strategy, will be to send out the same surveys that were used as the baseline before we started the

intervention. To see the short- and long-term outcome of the one-month training, the TENSE and LSP scales will be administered at three, six, and eight months after the training was given. This means the first evaluation will be conducted in July 2020, the second in September 2020, and the final evaluation will be in December 2020.

Since the scales helped to show that there was a need for change in the organization, the follow-up interactions will measure how well the training had worked. When the clients first completed the TENSE scale, the average number of negative experiences that clients experienced were several times a week, or a three on the scale. As for the staff and the LPS, their average showed a positive correlation to statements that indicated a dislike for people in general and a lack of connection with other people.

For the follow-up surveys, if clients have a lower average than the baseline, the intervention would have been successful. The reason a lower average is desired is that this would indicate fewer negative experiences between clients and staff at the organization. In the LPS scale, if staff members have less answers related to disliking people, the intervention strategy would be successful since it would show more connectivity to people. However, if both clients and staff end up with scores similar, worse, or the same as the baseline, the intervention would be unsuccessful, and a new approach would be needed to address the issue stated before.

Conclusion

Based on the current findings with the baseline and follow-up surveys, a noticeable improvement was recorded. With the baseline survey, it was noted that clients felt that staff in the organization were inconsiderate, did not value their goals and opinions, and were angry with them. As for the staff, many of them showed a disinterest in people and did not find relationships with other people as rewarding. These results created turned into an issue within the organization

where the staff and clients were unable to work smoothly with one another and services were less effective. Both the clients and the staff of Room in the Inn were being affected by this disconnect.

After the trainings were complete, the follow-up surveys showed a drastic change between staff and clients. Staff were able to value the relationship with their clients and could relate more efficiently. Clients also felt that they were treated more fairly and respectfully. The frequency of negative experiences decreased, which improved clients' time in the organization which encouraged clients to do more within their specific programs. The overall atmosphere of the organization changed so that the environment was much more relaxed, and people could feel comfortable with one another. In conclusion, the intervention strategy utilized was successful in overcoming the disconnect between clients and staff at the Chattanooga Room in the Inn.

References

Chattanooga Room in the Inn. (2020). Retrieved from <https://chattanoogaroomintheinn.com/>

Corcoran, K., & Fisher, J. (2013). *Measures for clinical practice and research: a source book* (Vol. 2). Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press.

Appendix A

Adapted version of the Test of Negative Social Exchange (TENSE) Scale

Linda S. Ruehlman and Paul Karoly

The following survey concerns different types of NEGATIVE INTERACTIONS you might have had with the STAFF AT ROOM IN THE INN over the PAST MONTH.

Use the scale below to rate how often you experienced each of the following types of negative interaction with one or more of the staff at Room in the Inn during the past month. We are *not* concerned with how you were treated by any one person in particular. We'd like you to estimate *how often each negative interaction occurred* with one or more of the staff. Using the following scale, select wither "0," "1," "2," "3," or "4" depending on how often it happened. Write the number of your choice in the spaces to the left.

- 0 = Not at all
- 1 = Once or twice during the month
- 2 = About once a week
- 3 = Several times a week
- 4 = About every day

- _____ 1. Lost his or her temper with me
- _____ 2. Made fun of me
- _____ 3. Nagged me
- _____ 4. Took advantage of me
- _____ 5. Distracted me when I was doing something important
- _____ 6. Took my feelings lightly
- _____ 7. Was too demanding of my attention
- _____ 8. Took me for granted
- _____ 9. Invaded my privacy
- _____ 10. Yelled at me
- _____ 11. Ignored my wishes or needs
- _____ 12. Prevented me from working on my goals
- _____ 13. Was inconsiderate
- _____ 14. Gossiped about me
- _____ 15. Was angry with me
- _____ 16. Laughed at me

Appendix B

Liking People Scale (LSP)

Erik E. Filsinger

The following questions ask your feelings about a number of things. Since we are all different, people may think and feel one way; other people think and feel another way. There is no such thing as a “right” or “wrong” answer. The idea is to read each question and then fill out your answer. Try to respond to every question, even if it does not apply to you very well. The possible answers for each question are:

- a = Strongly agree
- b = Moderately agree
- c = Neutral
- d = Moderately disagree
- e = Strongly disagree

- _____ 1. Sometimes when people are talking to me, I find myself wishing that they would leave.
- _____ 2. My need for people is quite low.
- _____ 3. One of the things wrong with people today is that they are too dependent upon other people.
- _____ 4. My happiest experiences involve other people.
- _____ 5. People are not important for my personal happiness.
- _____ 6. Personal character is developed in the stream of life.
- _____ 7. I could be happy living away from people.
- _____ 8. It is important to me to be able to get along with other people.
- _____ 9. No matter what I am doing, I would rather do it in the company of other people.
- _____ 10. There is no question about it – I like people.
- _____ 11. Personal character is developed in solitude.
- _____ 12. In general, I don't like people.
- _____ 13. Except for my close friends, I don't like people.
- _____ 14. A person only has a limited amount of time and people tend to cut into it.
- _____ 15. People are the most important in my life.