

Development of PACE program provides support to seniors and brings back purposeful, worthwhile work

Background

Cheyenne Regional Medical Center (Cheyenne Regional) in Wyoming is an acute care hospital that has been serving Laramie County and surrounding areas since 1867. With over 200 beds and 2,000 employees, Cheyenne Regional strives to serve its patients with exceptional care, focused on improving the overall health and well-being of the community. This focus on excellence has garnered industry recognition.

Recently, the Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) was introduced at Cheyenne Regional. The director of the program, Laurie Wright, wanted to find a solution for those elderly whose needs were not being met through traditional forms of senior care. After much research and review of various options, Ms. Wright and her team determined that

PACE provided the solution they needed. PACE programs aim to keep seniors in their homes and in the community for as long as possible by providing comprehensive medical care along with in-home care and other supportive services such as adult day health centers. By design, PACE addresses the issue of loneliness that many elderly face while still allowing them to remain independent. Health Dimensions Group assisted Cheyenne Regional in development of their PACE program from determining program feasibility and developing the application through program implementation. We spoke recently with Ms. Wright to review how she implemented the PACE program and her experience working with Health Dimensions Group.

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Laurie Wright, Program Director
Cheyenne Regional Medical Center

Interview

Health Dimensions Group (HDG): Why did Cheyenne Regional Medical Center choose to start a PACE program?

Laurie Wright (LW): As a group, we looked at and identified PACE as a program that would enable us to provide support to seniors. One of the things I have learned and that has become my focus or mantra is that PACE really creates purposeful, worthwhile work for these people who retired years ago, lost touch with all of their coworkers and friends, and had no reason to get up in the morning. PACE has restored that purposeful, worthwhile work. PACE participants can come to the PACE center to socialize and participate in activities and meetings with key professionals, participate in therapy, or just be there for someone else. To me, that is what PACE is all about.

HDG: I like how you talked about the meaningful work and the meaningful participation for seniors. Why is that so important?

LW: When I talk to groups and people who are interested in understanding more about PACE, I have all sorts of success stories. I was talking to one of our participants who, when I first met her, was unable to get up due to a past lower extremity fracture. Because she was afraid she'd do it again, she parked herself on the couch and didn't move for three months. By the time I got there, she could no longer walk, even though she'd been through rehab. She was lonely and didn't feel like she had meaning in her life. Now she walks around the PACE center with purpose and meaning without any assistive device. She's become the seamstress of the center. She loved to sew when she was young but hadn't in years. Now she comes to the center, grabs the sewing

machine, and just sews to her heart's content. It brought back purpose to her life.

HDG: How did you come to work with Health Dimensions Group?

LW: We saw the expertise we were looking for in Health Dimensions Group. I was impressed with conversations with Health Dimensions Group consultants. We felt it was the right fit. We wanted consultants with expertise and who also saw us as the right fit for partnering. This was not like hiring a consulting firm that would zoom in and tell me what to do and then zoom out. That's not a relationship. I was looking for that partnership—that relationship that was going to help me build this program from the ground up and take it as far as it could go.

HDG: What do you see as the greatest success of your PACE program?

LW: I think that our greatest successes are in what you see at the center every day, in the lives that we've been able to help improve. We've become a very stable, very solid, respected program in our state. We've been able to bring together the cream of the crop when it comes to staff because both our center manager and I have worked in the organization for many years. We have attracted some of the most outstanding staff in the system. People tell us they've never seen such a wonderful group of caring people in one place. They say that about our aides, about our therapists, about our social workers. The staff has definitely contributed to the success of the organization.

HDG: How has the PACE program helped not only your system, but the overall health system, achieve its strategic goals?

LW: The mission of Cheyenne Regional is to nurture and improve the health of individuals and the quality of life for our community—and that’s what PACE is all about. When I look at our overall strategic goals for the organization and when I look at the triple aim of healthcare—better health, better care, and lower cost—that’s really what you do in PACE. It is a key part of our overall population health strategy, allowing us to serve the unique needs of this population. In addition, for Cheyenne Regional, PACE has really become a learning laboratory. We are able to look at PACE as something the entire organization can learn from, both successes and mistakes, to identify which aspects of PACE might be of use with other populations. This is very important as Cheyenne Regional is increasingly accountable for the outcomes and cost-profile of diverse population segments. We really have become the place that people want to come to and visit and be a part of and learn how to do things differently, more efficiently, and more effectively.

HDG: What are your plans for the future of your PACE program?

LW: We see continued growth in our future, so we think we’ll continue to get bigger and bigger. We need to look at expansion beyond Cheyenne, and are looking at neighboring communities. Knowing what it takes financially to start up a PACE program in those first couple of years, with no certification, no revenue, and all the expenses, we did this at the right time.

About HDG

As one of the country’s leading full-service post-acute and senior services management and consulting firms, Health Dimensions Group partners with clients to deliver solutions that help solve their most complicated needs.

To evaluate the preparedness of your PACE program to respond to an evolving market place or to explore your options for integrating PACE into an overall population health strategy, please contact Brent T. Feorene, Vice President, Integrative Delivery Models, at brentf@hdgi1.com or 440-871-2756.

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