

ACTION Campaign

Promising Practices



Providing Rapid Access to Service

*Where is the Front Door?
Action Guide*

ACTION CAMPAIGN
Making an Impact on Addiction Treatment and Recovery



Where is the Front Door?

Purpose: to help you identify ways to make it easier for potential clients to find you.

Introduction: Finding substance abuse treatment services without a referral can be surprisingly difficult—and frustrating—for a potential client. Our industry markets mostly to payers, not to end users. Look up “substance abuse treatment” in a phone book and you will get referred to alcohol or drug treatment—if it is there at all. Look under “drug” and you will find 800 numbers for rapid detox programs, but not necessarily numbers for local treatment providers. Talk to physicians in emergency rooms of hospitals that don’t have treatment centers and many will have no idea how to get a patient into treatment. Making it as easy as possible for potential clients to reach you by phone or to find your front door can be a fast and easy way to increase admissions.

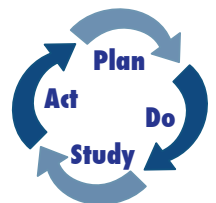
Plan: Imagine you or a family member needed treatment. Where would you look—phone book or online?

- If you look there, is your organization easy to find?
- Is your facility located in an out of the way address?
- Are you on bus lines or near a subway stop?
- How do people get to your agency?

The answer to all of these questions will help determine how easy it is for a client to find you. If you discover that you are hard to find, identify changes that you can make to increase your accessibility. Measure the number of client contacts at the point you intend to change. For example, if you are making a change to how people find your phone number, measure the number of phone calls. If you want to make it easier for people to get to your front door, try adding a map and directions on your Web site, then measure the percent of callers who get to the front door.

Do: Implement your change. Test only one thing at a time, even if you have identified multiple opportunities. By doing one change at a time, you can tell which change has the most impact for the least time, money, and effort, or if some changes have no impact at all. Collect the same data that you collected to measure how many people were finding you. These change cycles could be brief as two weeks. Some changes that have worked for other agencies include:

- Adding a map and directions on the agency Web site
- Making phone numbers easy to access
- Having a live person, rather than an automated system, answer phones
- Purchasing yellow page ads in phone books





Where is the Front Door?

Study: Compare pre and post change data. Did your change increase the number of people who call or show up at your front door? If you have seen improvement, continue with the change, if not, try another change that will make it easier for clients to find or get to you.

Act: Some changes, like buying advertising or changing phone systems, may be expensive and require you to act immediately without testing. Others lend themselves more easily to a PDSA Cycle change process. For those that you have been able to test and have found successful, continue and implement at other front door sites. Submit your data to the ACTION Campaign web site.

Measuring the Impact of Change

The length of time necessary to test a change will vary depending on an agency's size. Scientifically, the preferred sample size is at least 40 clients. However, since you are testing a hypothesis, what you need are just enough clients before and after the change to see a trend. Pilots should not last more than a month, or they tend to lose their pilot status. We recommend that you run your change project pilot long enough to have at least 20 clients experience your new way of operating. For smaller agencies, depending on the change, this may take a month. Larger agencies probably should run a change for at least a week, even if that gives a sample larger than 40.

Practice Measure: Number of client contacts at the point you intend to change For example, if you are making a change to how people find your phone number, measure the number of phone calls. If you are making a change on make it easier for clients to find your front door (by putting a map on your web site), measure by how many people get to the front door.



Where is the Front Door?



Action Campaign Metrics Evaluation Tool

Agency Name _____

Level of Care _____

Action Promising Practice _____

Tool for Tracking Improving Accessibility

Instructions:

1. Decide which point of contact you intend to change
2. Select an appropriate measure
3. Collect baseline data
4. Identify a start date for the change
5. Implement the changes
6. Record the new number of clients impacted by the point of contact change
7. For multiple cycles, please use a separate form for each cycle

Point of Contact _____

Point of Contact Measure _____

Number of (Relates to Measure) before the Change _____

Number of (Relates to Measure) after the Change _____

Practice Measure: Number of Client Contacts at the point you intend to change For example, if you are making a change to how people find your phone number, measure the number of phone calls or if you are making a change on how easy it is to get to your front door (like putting a map on your web site), measure by how many people get to the front door.

For example, your measurement form might look like this:

Point of Contact: Calls to the agency

Point of Contact Measure: Number of phone calls

Number of (Phone Calls) before the Change: 100

Number of (Phone Calls) after the Change: 150



Where is the Front Door?

NRI Community Services

Woonsocket, Rhode Island
www.nricommunityservices.org



NRI Community Services (NRICS) is a 40 -year old, CARF accredited, progressive, community-based social service agency that offers 24-hour emergency services, both independent and integrated mental health and substance abuse treatment services, residential co-occurring treatment services, violence intervention and prevention services, employment and housing programs, alternative schools for children and adolescents with special needs, elder case management services, specialized consultation to nursing homes, visiting nurse organizations and elder housing authorities, human service staffing services, and Technical Assistance Consultation & Training Services (TACTS).

Project Aim	Increase Admissions
Change Leader / Executive Sponsor	Michelle Taylor

Goals & Measures

Project staff conducted two walk-through exercises, which identified barriers such as arduous paperwork, intrusive questions, and lack of engagement during the first session due to the focus on completing the paperwork. While the goal of the initial assessment is to conduct a comprehensive understanding of the client’s strengths and needs, it became apparent as a result of the walk-through that the impact on the client was to overwhelm and potentially alienate him as a consequence of the sheer volume and breadth of the information collected.

Changes Implemented

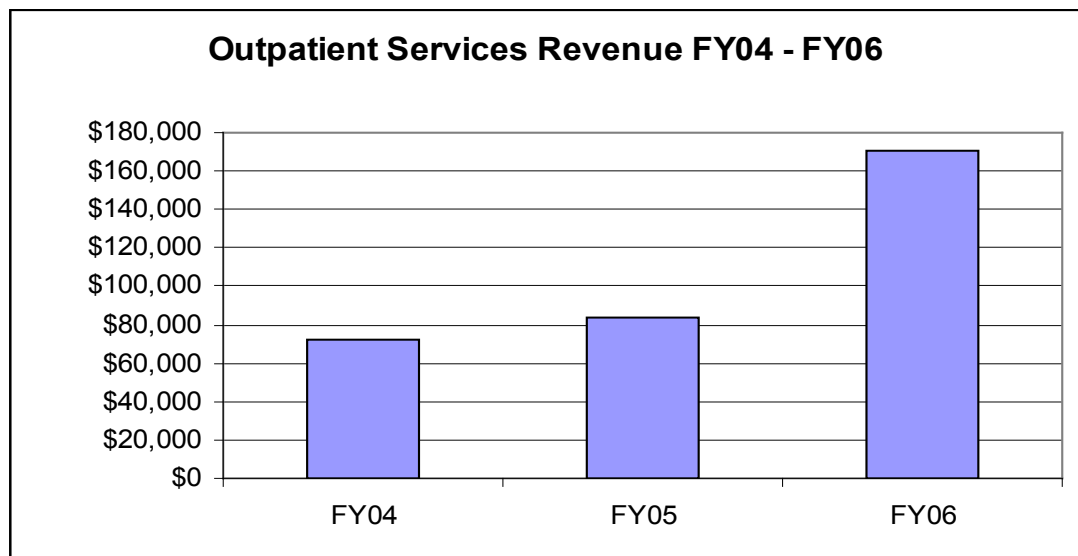
A significant challenge facing NRICS at the start of the grant was fragmentation of the intake process with several phone numbers in place for intake of clients into various programs. In 2005, the Emergency Services Team helped implement a centralized intake process. This resulted in a single intake line, making it easier for individuals and referral sources to access the full array of services. With emphasis on identification of individuals with co-occurring diagnoses, staff then conducted a comprehensive review of the paperwork. They modified screening, assessment, and treatment plan forms to ensure that co-occurring issues would be both identified and addressed. In addition, individuals licensed in chemical dependency provided staff supervision.



Where is the Front Door?

Business Case Impact

1. **Bottom Line Impact:** Increased admissions due to these changes led to an increase of 135 percent in outpatient revenue.
2. **Marketability/Competitive Advantage:** Emphasizing integrated co-occurring services has improved access for clients, eliminating the fragmentation of services that individuals with these disorders typically face. NRICS is building a reputation for being a leader in the delivery of co-occurring services, increasing the number of referrals to the agency.



Lessons Learned

Maintaining changes over time demands the commitment of the entire organization to the process. Monitoring the business case can be a tremendously powerful tool in reinforcing the value of the changes that have been made, as well as providing a means for ensuring that the project remains on course.



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Additional Success Stories for Where is the Front Door?

Agency	Level of Care	Change	Action Impact
St. Christopher's Inn ¹	Outpatient	Changed the process to engage clients from OP	Increased percentage of men participating in treatment from 53 to 71%
VIP Community Services ²	Intensive Outpatient	Changes in the Admission Process	Increased census by 60% from 140 to 225

¹ http://www.niatx.net/PDF/PIPractice_CaseStudies/St.Chris_10.04_final.pdf

² <https://www.niatx.net/PDF/PIPractice/Case Studies/VIP.pdf>