

# PROMISING PRACTICES



## **Patient-Centered Care Initiative uses frequent surveys to improve organization's services and patient satisfaction**

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At [Michael's House Retreat](#) in Palm Springs, California, we are committed to providing effective, evidence-based integrated treatment for individuals with co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disorders. We strive to meet and exceed the needs and expectations of all of our customers, whether they are patients, families, alumni, or referral sources. This commitment means we must create a high quality experience at every point of contact, beginning with the search for treatment options and progressing through admission, treatment, discharge, and aftercare.

Yet, despite our best intentions, it is somewhat difficult to put ourselves in the place of the people we're treating and fully understand the recovery process from their perspectives.

The value of viewing treatment through the eyes of our patients was reinforced when an intern at our corporate headquarters was admitted as a patient at each of our organization's facilities, including Michael's House Retreat. While the intern lived in each facility for 30 days, he openly gathered feedback through interviewing other patients and sitting in on group and individual counseling sessions.

The intern returned with valuable findings for our corporate management team. Besides pinpointing program areas that could be improved, the intern identified a gap in our information gathering: we needed to seek feedback from patients throughout the treatment process from start to finish.

Our Patient-Centered Care Initiative was thus born. The process is straightforward. Patients complete an initial survey within 72 hours of

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entering treatment. Then they complete weekly surveys throughout the course of treatment and an exit survey when they leave. Family members and referral sources are also encouraged to participate in regularly timed surveys.

The information we gather helps us strengthen program areas that are successful and highlights areas for improvement. The constant stream of patient feedback is invaluable in helping us develop and refine our program and services.

Our information gathering also gives patients a greater voice in their treatment. They are assured that we listen to and act on their comments and concerns. For example, the surveys allowed us to identify and resolve inconsistencies in services and communications. As a result of the feedback, we clarified our preadmission information to address patients' confusion over access to amenities. These seemingly minor issues can be significant to persons in the early stages of treatment -- while they're still deciding whether they can trust us.

Patient feedback is gathered both face-to-face and on paper. In weekly feedback therapy groups, individuals practice giving honest feedback to each other and to Michael's House Retreat program leaders. They participate in a written survey at the end of the group sessions.

The opportunities for patients to regularly comment are also helpful because many enter treatment without the basic skill set to express themselves. Throughout the feedback process, they can practice and gain confidence in interpersonal communications -- tools they can continue to apply in their lives after they leave treatment.

Since we began the weekly surveys, we've seen our patient satisfaction scores consistently rise. We are confident that the Patient-Centered Care Initiative is productive, and we are thrilled to have this valuable tool to provide practical ways to continuously evaluate and improve our program. Confirming the initiative's long-term value, [CARF](#) recognized it with an exemplary in our 2011 survey.

Your organization's behavioral health program might differ from ours in many ways. Yet, as treatment professionals, we all share a desire to provide the best care possible for our patients. We hope other organizations will find ways to incorporate programs similar to our Patient-Centered Care Initiative.

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For more information on our Patient-Centered Care Initiative, contact Krista Gilbert, CEO, Michael's House Retreat, at [Krista.Gilbert@frnmail.com](mailto:Krista.Gilbert@frnmail.com). The organization's website is at [www.michaelshouse.com](http://www.michaelshouse.com).