

KAIZEN RESULTS

Quicker forensic movement will result in expedited mental health treatment

IN BRIEF: At Northcoast Behavioral Healthcare, some forensic patients are treated and discharged back to jail, while others are treated and eventually discharged to the community through a careful process that involves numerous steps and court approval. A Kaizen team analyzed every aspect of forensic admission and movement, intent on maintaining process integrity while increasing efficiency, to ensure that patients receive needed mental health treatment expeditiously.

SIMPLY BETTER: The new process has 36 steps – compared to 122 steps with the previous process, for a 70% reduction.

STREAMLINING IN ACTION: The number of handoffs in the process was cut from 37 to 6 (84% reduction), decision points from 25 to 6 (76% reduction), and loopbacks from 14 to 6 (57% reduction).

SMART USE OF RESOURCES: Once in place, the new process will require about 1,895 fewer work hours per year – time that can be redirected to areas where staff are needed. Reduced postage and printing are expected to save about \$64,000 annually.

Kaizen Event RESULTS SCORECARD	BASELINE	PROJECTIONS	
	Key process measures, gathered at the start of the Kaizen event	Projected measures once all improvements are in place	PROJECTED CHANGE
PROCESS STEPS	122	36	70% reduction
HANDOFFS	37	6	84% reduction
DECISION POINTS	25	6	76% reduction
LOOPBACKS	14	6	57% reduction

DETAILS

Northcoast Behavioral Healthcare is a 260-bed facility located in Northfield, Ohio. About three-fourths of its patients are forensic, and each person in this group is further categorized as a pre-trial or post-trial forensic patient.

For patients admitted for pre-trial purposes (such as restoration to competency), the treatment focus is to stabilize the patient, provide the court with an opinion, and discharge back to jail.

For patients admitted for post-trial purposes (such as persons found not guilty by reason of insanity), the treatment focus is also to stabilize the patients – then to progress the patient through increasing levels of movement toward discharge to the community. In all cases, forensic patients cannot be discharged without court approval, which requires a multitude of internal and external steps.

Needless to say, the process of forensic movement – from when Northcoast receives a referral from court to when the patient is discharged or returned to jail or prison – needs to be done effectively with each and every patient.

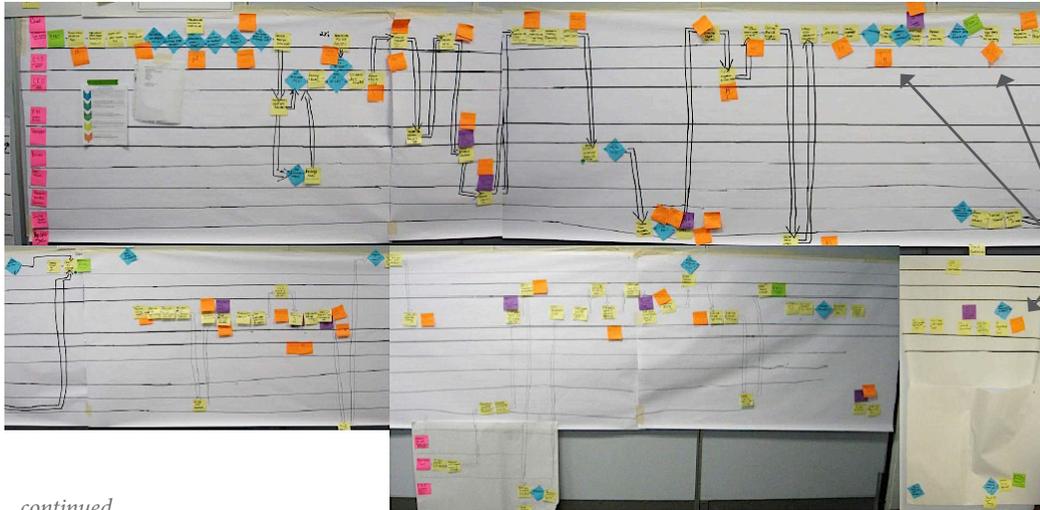
It also should be done efficiently, and that's where Northcoast identified an opportunity for improvement. The forensic movement process had become complicated and bulked up with overlapping steps – while in other cases, important steps seemed to be missing. Ideally, forensic admissions and subsequent movement should unfold quickly so that

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TRANSFORMING THE PROCESS

After mapping the current process (left), the team could see just how complex the workflow had become. They counted 122 process steps.

The orange sticky notes that are scattered throughout the process denote identified points of waste: overprocessing, rework, waiting, and so on.

Below, several team members are studying the process and documenting all occurrences of inefficiency.

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patients can expeditiously receive the mental health treatment they need.

A Kaizen team took on the challenge during an intense week of work. Team members analyzed the current process, identified improvement measures, created a new process, and developed a set of action plans to ensure implementation.

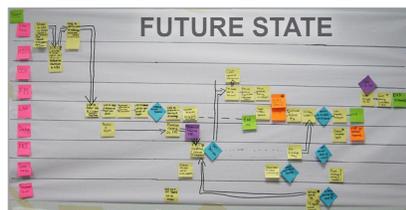
The team's detailed map of the current approach to forensic movement revealed 122 process steps, 37 handoffs, 25 decision points, and 14 loopbacks – showing a clear need for improvement. The team responded by designing a streamlined process that gets the job done with just 36 steps (a 70% reduction), 6 handoffs (84% reduction), 6 decision points (76% reduction) and 6 loopbacks (57% reduction).

With the new process, the team moved toward a paperless system, creating a single “snapshot” database to track patient data and internal movement – and provide accurate, instant reports. The plan is for this to replace the multiple tracking databases used previously.

The team endorsed having the admissions department assume all patient admissions, in order to reduce the unintended duplication of services among hospital departments. To shorten the time to submit court reports, the plan calls for using the existing Microsoft Outlook calendar with reminder alerts to ensure timely report submissions and easier scheduling.

Overall, the Kaizen event helped team members clarify stakeholder roles along with policies and procedures – an improvement in itself that will ensure effective use of staff resources.

According to team calculations, savings from reduced postage and paper will add up to \$64,000 per year. And the new process will require about 1,895 fewer work hours annually – time that can be redirected to value-added work activities. ●



The team used its analysis of the current process to pinpoint improvement opportunities. Then it was on to development of the transformed process, shown at left in all its simplicity.

The team developed implementation plans to ensure a successful rollout of the improved process. Below is a page from the communication plan.

What	Who	When (Date)	Mode	Responsible (who)
New Contact Person at NBH	Court-Clinic	7/15	Letter / Email	Harriet
New Contact Person and Fax #	Jail Liaison		Phone / Email	Pam / Harriet
New Contact Person	Transport / Jail Staff		Email	Pam / Harriet
New Communication Method	Judge		Letter or In person	Harriet
General overview of New process	Bailiff		Phone Call	Pam / Harriet
New Contact Person and Fax #	Probation Dept for referrals		Phone Call	Pam / Harriet
Responsibility to track report due dates	Doctor		In person by CCO	Dr. Stankowski
General overview of improved process	Boards		Newsletter	Anne McClain
General overview of improved process	Forensic Monitors		In Person	Harriet