

BRIGHT LIGHTS AWARDS

2021

HEATHER GRIFFIN, CENTRAL BRAMPTON FAMILY HEALTH TEAM

Award: Reducing Unnecessary Care

Achievement: Quality Patient Navigation Support



The newly designed mental health referral intake process implemented by Central Brampton Family Health Team (CBFHT) has addressed a key team concern with wait times and re-referrals. Under the leadership of RPN Heather Griffin, it demonstrates that a willingness to support innovation can have significant positive outcomes.

By delivering the right service to the right patient at the right time, CBFHT has reduced unnecessary primary care. The services provided meet the needs of each individual patient, rather than insisting on a one-size-fits-all approach. No patient referred from either of CBFHT's sites have been left without timely access to best fit care, been declined support or left not knowing what to do or how to manage their care. No one falls through the cracks of Ontario's complicated health and social service system. Heather leads the initiative with adaptability and flexibility, addressing gaps in service, and maintaining a solution- focused mindset with a genuine interest in seeing people receive the care they need.

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A genuine interest in patients is essential to providing good service, and follow-up is part of the CBFHT approach. Many patients have come to trust Heather and share their concerns with her, allowing the team to assess their experiences and suggest or provide additional supports, as needed. In addition, including family, caregivers or loved ones into the care planning process strengthens communication, leading to reduced anxiety and overall better emotional support.

Implementation of the new referral system has drastically reduced the wait time a patient experiences from receipt of referral to first contact. For example, CBFHT's mental health counselling waitlist has decreased from an average of 8 months to 2-3 months. Re-referrals have also dropped to zero, and patients can contact Heather first for information, rather than turning to their doctor.

If a team values flexibility both in how a process is designed and in how that process is implemented, the success will be seen in the results and patient satisfaction.

Key Facts:

- Established a new referral system where patients are now directed either to external programs or in-house counselling, as appropriate
- Wait times, once four or six months at respective sites, are now one to three days
- Waitlists have been cut approximately in half
- Strengthened ties with partner organizations
- Reduced unnecessary use of primary care
- Reduced re-referrals