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PROMISING PRACTICES



First responders save lives and time

by Heidi Sykora DNP, APNP, GNP-BC
Milwaukee Center for Independence

Every second counts in a medical emergency.

The likelihood of an unexpected medical crisis is high in an organization like the [Milwaukee Center for Independence](#) (MCFI), which serves more than 15,000 individuals of all ages with physical, developmental, and cognitive disabilities. MCFI's main campus is a diverse hub for its more than 50 programs. In addition, the organization operates two satellite campuses and several commercial kitchen sites throughout the Milwaukee community.

Recognizing the reality that a medical crisis might occur at any time and at any location, MCFI formed a first response team. The first response team includes staff volunteers trained in CPR/AED; registered nurses; and others who fill important roles such as security, recorder, and runner.

When a medical or first aid crisis arises, the receptionist announces "code white" and the location of the emergency over the intercom. First responders rush to the scene and work together to assist the victim.

A major improvement last year enabled the first response team to perform more effectively and efficiently. Previously, each responder had a "run bag" containing emergency response supplies such as an ambu bag, glucometer, and pulse oximeter. When a code white was called, responders needed to retrieve their run bag plus the AED, oxygen, and suction equipment.

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Volume 8, Issue 6
July 2013

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An organization receiving exemplary recognition in its CARF survey report stands out because of its professional and strategic response to a service or business need. CARF presents these ECS Promising Practices articles to encourage dialogue among service providers and to offer examples of creative solutions for improving service quality.

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No matter how well the first responders organized their run bags, finding the right items quickly and under pressure in an emergency situation cost responders valuable time in attending to the victim. Moreover, the task of tracking expiration dates and replacing outdated supplies in twenty bags at multiple locations was time consuming and expensive.

Recognizing that rapid access to the necessary equipment would improve the efficiency of the first response team, MCFI purchased a mobile code cart for every floor of each of its sites. A code cart neatly organizes all equipment needed during an emergency for easy access. First responders know the locations of the carts and can roll a cart to the crisis scene when called.



Above: MCFI first responders (clockwise from lower left) Dawn Kondreck, Jodie Pryor, Scott Curwick, Heidi Sykora, Gina Wheeler, Rosalyn Robinson, Christine Boyce, Scott Lefeber, and Shannon Guibord gather around a code cart. Members of the main campus first response team not pictured are Karen Cohen, Michelle Grams, Lisa Dehn, Nancy Pickett, Nicole Miller, and Linda Zajork.

“It is a great improvement to have all of the necessary lifesaving equipment arriving at the same time,” reports Scott Curwick, a first responder and MCFI senior human resource specialist. He adds, “The first response team also developed a form to guide appropriate response to specific types of emergencies and serve as documentation of each event.”

A recent [CARE](#) survey report commended MCFI because it “highly values the safety of persons served, employees, and



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visitors to the organization.”

Using the code carts, MCFI’s first responders can save precious time when answering a call for help. The CARF survey report noted that the new carts and improved first response team procedures “have greatly improved the safety and immediate response measures that staff members can take to provide proper emergency care for almost any situation.”

Below: MCFI first responder and senior human resource specialist Scott Curwick.



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