

## 4) Continuous Improvement Program

Hebrew SeniorLife

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### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Under the leadership of the Process Improvement (PI) Department, our organization has been driving organizational efficiency through the deployment of continuous improvement using lean and six sigma methodologies. The deployment is based on four pillars; Education and Culture, Improvement Projects, Communication/Recognition and Employee Engagement.

**Education and Culture:** To drive long-term continuous improvement, it is imperative for all employees to become process improvement experts.

Our organization focuses on a top-down education program that started with a Lean Leadership Program targeting senior staff (director level and above) followed by all leaders. In this two-day program, leaders learn lean tools as well as techniques to lead continuous improvement. Leaders explore how to create an environment to support employees to always look for improvement. For certification, leaders are required to complete an improvement project with a coach from the PI department.

**Phase II of training** targets front-line employees through an introduction to lean and continuous improvement. Employees use the 7 fundamental wastes to change how they look at their work environment and see opportunities for improvement. They come out of the workshop having identified waste in their own workspace so that they can begin leading improvement immediately.

**Improvement Projects:** The process improvement team partners with business and clinical leaders to lead cross-functional projects using lean and six sigma methodologies. The goal of these projects is to reduce waste, improve efficiency and quality.

**Communication/Recognition:** The organization publishes a monthly "Continuous Improvement" newsletter to all employees. This newsletter recognizes projects from around the organization as well as teams and individuals who are embracing continuous improvement and driving change.

**Employee Engagement:** Sustainable continuous improvement comes from engaging employees to capture their ideas for improvement through "continuous improvement" boards. These boards are highly visible places for employees to submit ideas and track their progress to completion. The boards are split into 4 columns:

- 1) IDEAS: In this column, employees use sticky note to post ideas to eliminate waste, improve workflow, quality and patient experience
- 2) TO DO: Ideas move to this column when the team decides it is something they want to work on
- 3) DOING: Ideas move to this column when an owner has been assigned and it is actively being worked on
- 4) DONE: Ideas move to this column when the idea has been completed.

Process improvement and nursing leadership introduced a continuous improvement champion program on every nursing floor. Champions lead continuous improvement with their peers, including facilitation of improvement boards and sharing of ideas with each other.

### OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

- Education and Culture: 167 leaders completed lean leadership, including 98% of senior staff. 64 front line employees educated in an introduction to lean and continuous improvement. At least \$115K annual impact from completed lean leadership projects.
- Projects: As of August 2015, 18 active projects being led / facilitated by the PI department. 2015 financial impact = \$531K
- Communication and Relationships: 12 newsletters in FY 2015. 24 employees recognized organization-wide for their contributions to continuous improvement.
- Employee Engagement: 31 continuous improvement champions named and active across nursing floors. 39 boards deployed with hundreds of ideas generated.

### LESSONS LEARNED

- It is essential to make sure managers understand continuous improvement before training their employees. In one department, a group of employees were trained before their managers, leading to a bad employee experience. Employees went back to their jobs ready to start generating ideas, only to be met by managers who did not support them or understand.
- Educating employees means we can take on more projects. When the PI team engages in a project now, it is likely that most of the project team members have been through lean training. Start-up time is shorter and team members take on more of a leadership role in the project, allowing the PI team to take on more projects and have a greater impact on the organization.
- It is very important for the PI team to follow our own advice in engaging front-line employees. On a few projects, we realized part way in that we had not engaged front-line to really understand the problem and/or best improvement.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- Transformation to consistently efficient “patient-first, zero-defect” care as a way of life is not a quick fix; it’s a journey the entire hospital must embrace every day
- The most efficient care is also the highest-quality, compassionate care and superior patient experience
- Focus on the patient first and all good things will follow