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09/08

Improving Recruitment and Retention

R&R TIPS

Utilize Incentives

1 Positive feedback is a great way to show staff that they are appreciated. This can include:

- A weekly “star” for the agency or study personnel;
- A round of applause at a staff meeting;
- Recognition in a newsletter; or
- A fruit basket for reaching a milestone.

2 Trial incentives are detailed in the protocol or operating manual and have to be approved by the local Institutional Review Board. However, other things can be positive without being expensive or onerous, for example:

- Coffee and doughnuts in the morning for patients who come in early;
- Bus tokens for those who are without a car;
- Television in the waiting room to pass the time;

- Thank you notes and birthday cards mailed to patients; and
- A comfortable seating area for patients.

3 Positive and caring staff is the greatest recruitment incentive of all.

- Give your staff the time and tools to be successful.
- Offer training and give feedback on how they are doing.
- Allow staff to stagger their hours to ensure that the patients can connect with open treatment windows.



Maximize Advertising

1 Free weekly newspapers are more likely to be read by your clients.

- Make sure your ad grabs the reader’s attention.
- Use catchy phrases such as: “Tired of Losing?” or “Want to Feel Good?”
- Ask the paper if they offer reduced rates for non-profits or community service organizations.

2 Reach participants through radio advertising.

- Find the right times and venues to coincide with your clients’ or their friends’ listening habits.
- Many community treatment programs report that talk radio shows, not music stations, are a better option for reaching their clients.
- The best time slots are late evening (after 9 p.m.) and during the middle of the night (after midnight).

3 Billboards can be very effective.

- Make sure your message is short and easy to remember.
- Target those riding on buses or walking, as they have more time to see and remember your ad.
- Seek those areas where there is high density housing.

4 Add the study to your agency website.

- Provide information on how to reach someone even after hours.
- Be sure the information is highly visible and easy to read.

5 In all types of advertising venues, use the same message.

- Make sure your message is consistent.
- Use the same slogans, colors, pictures, etc. in all media.

Improve Outreach

1 Allow staff time to volunteer in community groups where your patients may be found.

2 Ask emergency rooms to alert you when patients with potential drug overdoses are brought in.

3 Invite community groups to your agency for information exchange over breakfast or brunch.



BEST PRACTICES

If something works for your agency, that is your best practice. If not, be open to change, look for other ways to do things, extend your operating hours, rearrange your intake window, ask staff to brainstorm with you, and ask other programs what is working for them. Patient recruitment is a local issue, but with CTN’s multisite clinical trials, it impacts nationally. So reach out, ask questions, look for solutions, and work with the Lead Team to resolve issues.

R&R TIPS

How to improve **OUTREACH** efforts?

1 Allow staff time to volunteer in community groups where your patients may be found. This gives them an opportunity to make connections and to see the life challenges of your patients. This extra effort will put your agency on the map with these groups.

2 Ask emergency rooms to alert you when patients with potential drug overdoses are brought in—offer to discuss your trial with the staff and how it can help their patients.

3 Invite community groups to your agency for information exchange over brunch or breakfast. People will come for food and stay to listen to what you have to say. Reverse site visits with baked goods or doughnuts may be more acceptable for other groups. “Breaking bread” with others can foster a more positive environment for discussions.

How can **ADVERTISING** dollars be maximized?

1 Free weekly newspapers are more likely to be read by your clients. These are giveaway papers and are widely distributed. The placement of the ad in the weekly paper can be very important.

2 Radio advertising can be expensive, so it is important to find the right times and venues to coincide with your clients’ or their relatives’/friends’ listening habits. Many of our community treatment programs have reported that talk radio shows, not music stations, are a better option for reaching their clients.

3 Billboards can be very effective if the message is short and easy to remember. People driving cars are not as likely to see your message, but those riding on buses or walking will have more time to see the billboard and remember your ad.

4 Have the study added to your agency website. Provide information on how to reach someone, even after hours. Explain that this is a study for NIDA and NIH. Set up the website so readers can e-mail questions on the study to a central research coordinator.

5 In all types of advertising venues, use the same message so it will be remembered. Use the same slogans, colors, pictures, etc., if possible. Repeated exposures to the same message have a greater chance of being remembered.



How can **INCENTIVES** help my study?

1 Positive feedback is a great way to show staff that they are appreciated. This can be a weekly “star” for the agency or study personnel, a round of applause at a staff meeting, recognition in a newsletter, a fruit basket for reaching a milestone, etc. It doesn’t have to cost money, but should be sincere and tied to trial performance in some way.

2 Trial incentives are detailed in the protocol or operating manual and have to be approved by the local Institutional Review Board. However, other elements can be considered positive features without being expensive or onerous: coffee and doughnuts in the morning for patients who come in early; bus tokens for those who are without a car; free transportation via your agency van pool to homeless shelters or soup kitchens; a television, toys, and magazines in the waiting room to pass the time; bottled water for patients; thank you notes and birthday cards mailed to patients; and a comfortable seating area for patients.

3 Positive and caring staff is the greatest recruitment incentive of all. Give your staff the time and tools to be successful. Offer training and give feedback on how they are doing. Ask the Lead Team if more training is needed. Allow staff to stagger their hours to ensure that the patients can connect with open treatment windows. If your client population is difficult to recruit, ask the Lead Team if you can have more support (e.g., more dollars for bus tokens if a great percentage are homeless, help with designing ads, a recruitment specialist to contact local agencies, staff mileage reimbursement for driving to off-site locations, or the opportunity to partner with another Community Treatment Programs in order to help each other in the early months).

Best Practices

If something works for your agency, that is your best practice. If not, be open to change, look for other ways to do things, extend your operating hours, re-arrange your intake window, ask staff to brainstorm, or ask other programs what is working for them. Patient recruitment is a local issue, but with CTN’s multisite clinical trials it becomes a national matter. Poor recruitment at one site can impact the enrollment required at other sites. So reach out, ask questions, look for solutions, and work with the Lead Team to resolve issues. Drug addiction is a terrible disease, but with your help, we can make a difference.

Thanks for being a part of our trials!