**Innovation Fellowship Briefing Note:**

“*Addressing Caregivers Needs in Community Care*”

**Report Date:** March 13th, 2020

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**Background and Context:**

There are more than 8 million caregivers in Canada, and more than half report feeling burnt out with caregiving responsibilities. They fulfill an unpaid role which saves Canada’s healthcare system nearly $31 billion annually. Community service providers (SP) encounter burnt out caregivers daily, however they have limited time, funding and limited readily available resources and knowledge on how to best address caregiver needs. Therefore, caregiver needs are often overlooked and challenging to address. Caregivers report concerns about feeling lost in the healthcare system, lacking knowledge on community resources, and are unaware on how to cope with caregiver burn out. As a result, they typically experience adverse physical, psychological, social, and financial hardships for which they are generally unprepared. If community service providers are more knowledgeable about addressing caregiver needs and about community resources, they will be able to better address caregiver needs in the community. Caregivers are an integral part of a client’s healthcare team, and they need to be well supported in order to optimize a client’s healthcare journey.

**Aim Statement**

Increase service providers’ confidence level and use of resources in providing caregiver support education in the community by 30% by March 1st, 2020 within the Central Team at VHA Rehab Solutions.

**Needs Assessment**

**Caregiver Interviews:** Qualitative interviews were completed with four caregivers about their experiences with the healthcare system and service providers and to understand how service providers can best address caregiver needs which informed the project interventions.  
  
**SP Focus Group (N= ~60):** Focus groups were held with Central VHA Teams. Two topics were discussed: SPs’ barriers to addressing caregiver needs and resources they would benefit from to address caregiver needs. Themes were collected from these discussions and compared to the caregiver interview results in order to inform the project interventions.

**Change ideas and interventions implemented through this project:**

* Evidence-based educational handouts were developed for SP to provide to caregivers and Service on various caregiver interventions [such as…. Add here]. A compilation of community resources to best address caregiver needs in the community was also developed. All resources were, uploaded on the Loop (VHA’s online resource portal) for SPs to access.
  + Resources were modified based on feedback from key stakeholders: three project champions with content expertise, project mentor and VHA Clinical Educator (January and February 2020)
* A “Caregiver Tip of the Day” was distributed via email to all SPs every other day for two weeks prior to in-person education session as a form of pre-education; emailed information about caregiver online resources and caregiver interventions
* Ongoing engagement and project updates were provided at each VHA team meeting since start of the fellowship to maintain buy-in and interest from colleagues (October and December 2019)
* Education sessions [add how many education sessions were held] on best practice caregiver assessments and interventions to address caregiver needs were delivered to SPs. The presentation was uploaded on the Loop for future reference (February 18th and 20th 2020)
  + SPs completed evaluation forms for resources and education session

**Evaluation Plan and Results**

**Pre/Post Intervention Chart Audit (N=77):** Identified proportion of Occupational Therapist SPs that identify and recommend caregiver specific recommendations

* *Pre-Intervention*: (Completed October 2019)- Evaluated charts from February/March 2019
  + Low percentage of SPs were identifying caregiver stress (22%) and needs in their charts (8%), and documenting addressing any caregiver needs (35%)
* *Post-Intervention*: (completed February 2020)- Evaluated charts from January 2020/February 2020
  + Audit done before intervention implementation to evaluate if raising awareness about caregivers at VHA team meetings lead to a change in documentation
  + Increases seen in: charts documenting caregiving needs (19%), recommendations made for caregivers (12%) and charts recommending coping strategies (4%)

**Pre/Post Intervention Confidence Survey- Central Team:** Measured SPs confidence in 16 evidence-based caregiver specific interventions in their practice on a five-point Likert scale (ranging from no confidence to extremely confident).

* *Pre-Intervention* (N=33)
  + Overall average confidence level in addressing caregiver needs: 2.73/5 (between minimal and moderate confidence)
* *Post-Intervention* (N=44)
  + Overall average confidence level in addressing caregiver needs: 3.07/5 (between moderate to very confident); 12% increase in confidence from pre-intervention measure
  + SPs’ confidence level in each intervention increased an average of 9%

**Process Measures:** Measure the number of views and downloads for newly uploaded resources on the Loop

* Total number of attendees for education session: ~50
* View counts on the caregiver resource folder on the Loop (as of 3/3/2020): 68 (upload date:14/2/2020)

**Impact and Conclusions**

* Increased awareness of addressing caregiver needs in the community at VHA Central team
* Increased caregiver related resources and more streamlined manner of accessing resources on the Loop
* Increased need for more education sessions and resources for SPs and caregivers

**Sustainability and Spread:**

* Education session to be refined and be offered as an interprofessional learning opportunity at VHA
* Increase caregiver related recommendations in health teaching strategies section of OT assessment form on EMRI (VHA’s online documentation system)
* Presenting at VHA Clinical Lead team meeting about project results; includes clinical leads from various VHA teams
* New caregiver specific folder on the Loop, caregiver resources will now reside there moving forward