

## **Tips for Success When Implementing a Pharmacy-based Medication Assistance Program**

Prior to the implementation of a pharmacy-based PAP, it would be wise to consider the following suggestions to help ensure success.

1. Ascertain the *level of commitment* to the program pharmacy leadership, physicians, social workers and hospital leadership have. Their commitment is crucial to success.
2. Choose the *patient population* carefully.
3. It is wise to begin with *a trial of the program* to test the ability of available resources to handle the expected number of patients and prescriptions.
4. Define and communicate the program's *definition of a "patient"*. (This is not as obvious as it may seem.) Patient eligibility questions include:
  - a. Is a patient required to currently be under the care of a physician at the medical center?
  - b. Does this include patients who were referred to the medical center in the past, but presently see a staff physician only on an annual basis?
  - c. Will a patient be able to continue participating in the program after he/she has been referred back to his/her local community physician? If so, what will be put in place to ensure patient safety?
  - d. Can current patients' spouses or other family members benefit from the program? (You *will* get asked this question by your patients!)
5. *Communicate clearly all policies and procedures to patients* prior to their admission to the program. Some of the most important points to emphasize are:
  - a. Patients are expected to pay for prescriptions during any time period in which medications have not yet been received from the manufacturer. The PAP is unable to provide 100% of patients with 100% of their medications the rest of their lives.
  - b. Be specific about which medications can be provided through the program. Patients should understand that all prescription medications they take might not be provided.
  - c. Provide instructions on requesting medication refills.
  - d. Make sure patients are aware of the program's hours of operation.
  - e. If appropriate, ask patients to make appointments with program staff or if allowed, show up at any time to request or pick up medications.
  - f. Inform all patients in writing that the program, or anyone associated with it, cannot be held liable for negative outcomes experienced as a result of non-compliance with taking medication for any reason.
  - g. Stress that the program is a service, not a right, and therefore PAP staff members reserve the right to ask patients to leave the program under certain conditions (e.g. showing disrespect.).

6. *Communicate clearly all policies and procedures to physicians* before implementation. Some of the most important points to emphasize are:
  - a. If physicians and patients outside the targeted patient population inquire about participation, explain that limited resources dictate the number of patients that can be helped.
  - b. Remind physicians of their role in the program. Examples include the necessity of requiring their signatures and the possibility that some drugs may be shipped to their offices.
  
7. *Communicate clearly all policies and procedures to Social Workers.* Remind social workers of their integral role in preferring patients and providing financial/coverage information as appropriate.