

Caring Clown Pilot Program Assessment

Date:	July 15, 2010
To:	Advisory Committee on Long-Term Care Homes & Services
From:	General Manager, Long-Term Care Homes & Services
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

The Caring Clown Program, offered by The Chang School of Continuing Education, Programs for the 50+, brought students to perform, within a supervised practicum, for residents from varied profiles at the pilot sites – Carefree Lodge, Castlevue Wychwood Towers, Cummer Lodge and Fudger House between January and March 2010.

The Coordinators of Volunteer Services worked with Programs & Services to ensure as many residents as possible were able to enjoy the performances and practicum visits of the caring clown students and assisted with this pilot program assessment.

Financial Impact

There are no financial implications to the operating budget arising from this report.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

In the fall of 2010, nine students who had already completed “Introduction to Clown” registered in the “Caring Clowns” program with a focus on the understanding and practice of techniques that can be applied to the caring concept of clowning in therapeutic facilities, with an emphasis on clowning in long-term care.

On September 25, 2009, the Advisory Committee on Long-Term Care Homes and Services adopted report HA25.2 entitled “Caring Clown Pilot Program”, endorsing the on-site shows and practicum. The report noted that the pilot program would be evaluated in a report back to Advisory Committee.

COMMENTS

Residents with dementia, those who take little part in existing resident programs, are more socially isolated or face language barriers were targeted for the pilot program.

Measurement of Success

Following a Quality Management Approach, these indicators were identified:

Date Location Time	Resident Attendance	Feedback	Visual Cues of Residents	Physical Response of Residents
January 26, 2010 Fudger House Auditorium 10:30 a.m.	36	When asked 33 wanted repeat performance	20 had an understanding facial expression and were smiling	15 were clapping and singing along or nodding to music
February 2, 2010 Cummer Lodge Auditorium 10:30 a.m.	50	Gentle approach and interaction was positive and well received	30 were smiling and following along	25 were clapping, singing and holding onto clown beads as they moved about
February 23, 2010 Carefree Lodge Auditorium 10:30 a.m.	42	Positive comments received by residents and guests at show; 26 residents asked for repeat show	40 residents showing visual cues – smiling, focusing on performance	30 tried reaching for performers, clapping, interaction and participation
March 30, 2010 Castlevue Wychwood Towers Auditorium 10:30 a.m.	45	18 residents nodded and responded positive for repeat shows; involvement of Administrator and Managers alongside volunteers and clowns was enjoyable	36 residents smiled and laughed; 2 followed movement across room	12 were reaching for performers, clapping, interaction and participation with action

Qualitative Assessment

Comments from managers, staff and volunteers who attended the sessions are highlighted below. Particular attention to participation, social inclusion, stimulation, and communication are noted:

- At the beginning, the clowns went around to individual residents, dusting them off with prop feather duster, measuring their feet with a tape measure and this helped to set up the performance and relaxed the residents and set a playful atmosphere.
- The clowns had good eye contact with the residents.
- The mime act was very good and easy for the residents to follow.
- No residents left the Lounge during the performance and it was noted that the residents were actually interacting with each other about the show, as well as interacting with the Caring Clowns. The Manager of Programs and Services commented that this is very unusual for this population of residents, who are generally isolated due to their impairment. This is very beneficial for these residents.
- There was a high rate of participation; the Clowns were definitely socially-inclusive, reaching out to the most isolated residents and always receiving a positive response. Certainly the residents were stimulated and were communicating with each other about the performances.
- The Recreation staff on the secured unit has indicated that the clowning session provided on the unit was therapeutic for many of the residents.
- The Coordinators, Volunteer Services in all four pilot homes have received positive feedback and some of our existing volunteers and a few family members might be interested in learning more and perhaps adding clowning-type activities to their regular involvement with the residents.

Continuing the Relationship

During the summer months, recently graduated caring clowns have committed to a regular schedule of three visits at each of the four pilot site homes to clown for the residents.

Sharing their experiences with the other six homes, a group attended and gave a mini-performance at the spring T.I.V. (Toronto Inter-Home Volunteer) dinner meeting. The program coordinator/instructor provided an overview of the pilot program and suggested ways to include clowning in the volunteer program on a go-forward basis. This includes offering a skill developing workshop in the fall designed to give volunteers skills that encourage playfulness, spontaneity and musicality. Details on a Good Humour Volunteer Program workshop are attached.

A couple of Caring Clowns volunteered at the Toronto Challenge and provided direction to walkers at the 5k/1k route split on Wellington Street at Blue Jays Way. They were seen by thousands of participants and dozens of representatives from the community agencies on hand who work with seniors across the City.

While it is difficult to prove that “laughter is the best medicine”, it was strongly felt by all those involved that the Caring Clown pilot was a success and did make a difference in the quality of life and enjoyment of the residents. It is the intent to integrate Caring Clowns and Good Humour Volunteering into the volunteer programs throughout the Division.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

1. Good Humour Volunteer Program flyer