

**Department of Medical Assistance Services**

**Division of Long-Term Care**

# **VIRGINIA GOLD**



**Interim Report of *Virginia Gold* Program**

**September 1, 2009 through August 31, 2010**

**Amy K. Burkett, Program Coordinator**

## Division of Long-Term Care at DMAS

The Division of Long-Term Care (LTC), Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS), is committed to encouraging culture change in nursing facilities by improving employee retention and benefits, workforce models, physical environments, and organizational practices. This interim report will provide an overview of the current strategies and actions taken by each of the *Virginia Gold* grantees to meet the goals of the pilot program within the first year of the grant effective September 1, 2009 through August 31, 2010.



## BACKGROUND

A national movement is taking place around person-centered care and best practices. Person-centered core values are choice, dignity, respect, self-determination and purposeful living. Voices of older adults and their caregivers are considered and respected.

This vision translated into the future of care in the nation's nursing facilities is titled "culture change" and refers to care that is life-affirming, satisfying, humane, and meaningful. For this vision to take place, changes in systems require change in national and state regulations, policy and procedures; change in attitudes toward aging and elders; change in attitudes and behaviors of caregivers toward those for whom they care; and change in attitudes among elders toward themselves and their own aging process.

Culture change transformation may require changes in organizational practices, physical environments, relationships, and workforce models, which will lead to better outcomes for consumers and direct care workers without increasing costs to providers. Culture change has the prospect of increasing staff retention and assisting with staff recruitment.

In 2007, the Virginia General Assembly passed House Bill 2290 that required the Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) to establish a nursing facility quality improvement program. As a result, a diverse group of stakeholders, which included advocates, nursing facility representatives and state agency representatives, were brought together to form the Quality Improvement Program (QIP) Advisory Committee. The QIP Advisory Committee, which convened for six meetings during 2007 and 2008, was tasked with designing a quality improvement program to enhance the quality of care in the Commonwealth's nursing facilities using civil money penalty funds. Recommendations from the committee were presented in a report to the Joint Commission on Healthcare in October 2007. The initiative known as *Virginia Gold* is the product of the recommendations made by the QIP Advisory Committee.

*Virginia Gold* was designed to award funding of up to \$50,000 per year, for up to two years, to nursing facilities in order to improve recruitment and retention of CNAs (certified nursing assistants) through a competitive application and selection process in which applicants submitted a formal request for consideration for the grant. Funding was based on proposals submitted by the nursing facilities that incorporated the following criteria:

- Active involvement of all levels of staff - administrators, nurses, supervisors, CNAs, and others;
- Integration of a proposed plan into any quality improvement efforts underway in the facility;
- Propose changes that are systemic and sustainable in the facility;
- Use of best practice methods in designing and implementing quality improvement;
- Involve consumers, their families, and community;
- Demonstrate the level of need for quality improvement in the area of staff retention and reduction of turnover; and
- Identify goals, measures and benchmarks to define success of the plan.

In the Fall of 2009, after a selection committee, separate from the QIP Advisory Committee, reviewed 28 applications, five Virginia licensed and certified Medicaid nursing facilities were selected to participate in *Virginia Gold* in the creation or enhancement of a supportive workplace with the goal of reducing turnover and increasing retention of CNAs employed by nursing facilities.

The selection committee was comprised of eight members representing the Long Term Care State Ombudsman Office, Virginia Health Care Association, a continuing care facility, and DMAS. The selection committee followed specific evaluation criteria and chose five nursing facilities as follows:

- Trinity Mission Health and Rehabilitation Center of Charlottesville,
- Autumn Care of Portsmouth,
- Birmingham Green/Northern Virginia Health Center Commission,
- Dogwood Village of Orange County, and
- Francis Marion Manor/Mountain States Health Alliance.

These grantees identified strategies and approaches that addressed concepts such as:

- orientation,
- peer mentoring,
- coaching supervision,
- rewards and recognition, and
- training of staff.

The Virginia Health Quality Center (VHQC), a healthcare consulting firm that serves as the federally designated Quality Improvement Organization for Virginia, was chosen to provide technical assistance to the grantees. VHQC supports the *Virginia Gold* project by assisting grantees in activities such as the development of program improvement plans, consultation related to cultural change concepts (i.e.: consistent assignment, the identification of culture change resources, leadership development training), and CNA career development techniques. VHQC provided assistance through conference calls, on-site visits, and individual or group training sessions. The services were tailored to meet each facility's needs.

The Division of Long-Term Care worked in collaboration with the Division of Policy and Research in an evaluation of the *Virginia Gold* program. The formal evaluation process included focus groups conducted at each facility which were comprised of CNA staff and nursing facility residents. The findings from the first year of the program will be represented in a separate evaluation report prepared by the DMAS Division of Policy and Research staff.

The DMAS LTC Division staff has the responsibility for administration of the *Virginia Gold* project, to include contract monitoring of the five grantees and VHQC staff, facilitation of monthly conference calls with grantees, review of quarterly progress and budget reports from the grantees, and providing technical assistance, as needed, to the grantees.

## PROGRAM OUTCOMES

In the first year of the *Virginia Gold* grant, the CNA turnover rates were examined individually and collected among the five participating grantees. Turnover rates were calculated by dividing the total number of CNA terminations during a 12 month period by the average number of CNAs employed on the first day of each month. The rate was then multiplied by 100 to get the percentage.

The grant proposals submitted in the Spring of 2009 reported each nursing facility's CNA turnover rate based on data from January 2008 through December 2008; however, to measure program effectiveness, DMAS used grantee CNA turnover rate data based on calculations for the 12 months preceding the implementation of the program (baseline) compared to the first 12 months of the program (interim). The time period for the baseline measurement was September 2008 through August 2009. The interim comparison data was captured from September 2009 through August 2010. The aggregate baseline turnover rate was 53.5% as compared to the aggregate interim rate of 52.0%. This percentage indicates that the retention rates were about the same in the first year of *Virginia Gold* as the previous year. Individually, changes from baseline to interim ranged in improvement of up to 12%.

Although there was not a significant change in the overall CNA turnover rate, the grantees reported that there was a marked increase in CNA morale and job satisfaction as well as an increase in the CNA competency as a result of enhanced training. The results also indicate that it takes time and effort to establish a comprehensive CNA staff retention program to encompass all of the issues surrounding CNA turnover. It requires consistent and diligent monitoring, tracking, and facility staff time and effort to succeed.

It is important to note that the total initial grant amount available to the five grantees through the *Virginia Gold* program was \$250,000. However, the total amount awarded to the grantees was \$234,377.82, of which only \$136,468.76 was spent in the first year. The remaining amount of \$97,909.06 will be applied to the awards for the second year of which only a total of \$165,220.44 was requested and approved. These figures indicate that initiatives focusing on CNA staff retention can be implemented with a small financial investment.

It is the hope of the grantee participants that improvements will be observed in the turnover percentages at the end of the second year of the grant. New initiatives have been added to current CNA retention activities to enhance their *Virginia Gold* strategies for the second year of the grant.

## **PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS AND PROGRESS**

This section of the report describes each of the five grantees' culture change strategies and outcomes taken to address CNA staff turnover. Although there are other strategies that are not described in this section of the report, an effort was made to highlight the strategies that made an impact on staff and that provided sustainability for continued success in the future.

CNA turnover data taken from the grant proposals differs from the baseline rate used by DMAS to measure effectiveness. The award criteria for *Virginia Gold* included building upon existing quality initiatives which indicates that the grantees were already implementing culture change strategies prior to the formal start of the *Virginia Gold* grant program. As a result, some facilities experienced a decline in CNA turnover prior to the official start date of the *Virginia Gold* program and are reported under each facility in this section of the report.

### **AUTUMN CARE OF PORTSMOUTH**

Autumn Care of Portsmouth is a for-profit facility with 108 beds and 75% of residents are Medicaid participants. At the time of their proposal, the facility had 46 certified nursing assistants (CNAs) out of 125 staff and a CNA turnover rate of 74.7%. Autumn Care's goal is to reduce the CNA turnover rate to 47.8%.

#### ***PROGRAM STRATEGIES AND OUTCOMES:***

**Medical Benefit Program** – This program is arranged through a local community health center and offers physician office visits and prescriptions for employees at a lower cost. To date, eight CNA staff has utilized the benefits offered through the local community health center for 18 patient visits. Plans are to continue to promote this opportunity throughout the second year of the grant.

**Employee Assistance Program (EAP)** - The EAP offers counseling for employees in areas not limited to domestic abuse, alcohol and drug dependencies, mental health, grief, legal, financial, housing, child care, work place, and career planning. The EAP Project Coordinator conducted in-service training sessions monthly to explain the services and to generate interest and increased utilization of the services. Some of the in-service topics included team building, positive thinking, and communication. The facility also extended EAP benefits to CNA family members in an effort to increase utilization. There has not been an immediate increase in utilization of these services and it is believed to be due to staff concerned for their privacy, or lack of recognizing the need; however, it is anticipated that as CNA staff hear more about it, the services may be utilized more in the future. The EAP program will continue with a focus on increased marketing throughout the second year of the grant.

**Peer Mentoring Program** – A peer mentoring program was initiated for newly hired CNA staff to encourage retention. CNA peer mentors were paired with newly hired CNAs for initial

orientation and training. During the first year of the grant, 18 new CNA employees participated in the peer mentoring program, and 16 have remained employed. The CNA self evaluation opportunity and the round table hiring (which includes CNA staff) has been an effective tool in improving the evaluation process through staff input in hiring decisions. As a result, these two processes have empowered CNA staff and will continue in the second year.

**Employee Reward and Recognition Activities** – The facility provided recognition programs to reward staff such as the monthly staff appreciation day which is held to recognize CNA staff efforts. “On the Spot” recognition was established which recognizes when CNAs are observed doing something special or beyond expectations for residents or other staff.

**Enhanced Training and Development Opportunities for CNA Staff** – The facility implemented in-service and staff training at all levels to address problem solving, critical thinking, how to understand different personalities, enhancing skills learned, and developing better working relationships. Training sessions occur on a monthly basis and builds on the skills taught during the previous months.

## **BIRMINGHAM GREEN - NORTHERN VA HEALTH CENTER** **COMMISSION**

Birmingham Green (also known as Northern Virginia Health Center Commission) located in Manassas, is a nonprofit facility with 180 beds and 90% of residents are Medicaid participants. At the time of their initial proposal, CNA staff represented 67 out of 309 total facility staff and a turnover rate of 78%. The CNA turnover rate in September 2009 was 78% with a facility goal to reduce this percentage to 58.5%.

### ***PROGRAM STRATEGIES AND OUTCOMES:***

**Enhanced Training** – This facility decided to augment and enhance its existing CNA training program to build upon and increase CNA proficiency skills. A CNA training manual was developed by the staff to provide consistency in training. Training aides such as teaching stethoscopes, videos and books have been used to enhance the training experience for CNAs.

**Preceptor Program** – The preceptor program team provided support to newly hired CNAs through mentorship and hands-on training. The facility had 20 CNA staff who served as preceptors.

**Cultural Diversity Training** – This facility is unique in that staff and residents speak 32 different languages and have a variety of cultural experiences and backgrounds. To foster communication and team building the facility hosted a series of cultural diversity and sensitivity trainings. Additionally, the Staff Action Team (SAT), which is the facility’s diversity committee, identified a staff member as a “Coach” to assist with addressing cultural diversity differences. As a result, staff have become more aware of issues related to cultural differences and how their actions may impact others based on those differences. Diversity training sessions and activities are planned to continue during the second year of the grant program and will

expand to include all aspects of diversity including gender, diversity of thought, and sexual orientation.

**Employee Wellness Program** – This program promotes wellness, stress management, exercise, and healthier living activities for staff. An employee health survey was conducted to determine needs and interest among staff as it relates to health including physical activity, smoking cessation, and nutrition. The survey results indicated that staff were interested in learning about nutrition and smoking cessation. Workshops conducted by a dietician focused on nutrition topics. The facility also implemented a smoking cessation program titled “Freedom from Nicotine”, a 6 week program (one day per week) that is conducted by trained counselors, at no cost to employees. To date, 22 employees have participated in the program and about half have successfully quit smoking.

**Staff Awards and Recognition** – One of the facility’s main goals was to establish an effective awards and recognition system for CNA staff. To accomplish this goal, the facility implemented a “years of service” award program. These awards were presented monthly to staff who have completed a year or more of service with the facility.

## **DOGWOOD VILLAGE OF ORANGE COUNTY**

Dogwood Village of Orange County is a nonprofit facility with 164 beds and 54% of residents are Medicaid participants. At the time of the initial proposal, CNA staff represented 83 out of 235 staff and the facility had a 63% CNA turnover rate. The facility proposed to reduce the CNA turnover rate to 50%.

### ***PROGRAM STRATEGIES AND OUTCOMES:***

***Train the Trainer*** – The facility developed a program through their local community college to train nursing staff who were responsible for training and supervising CNA staff. Some of the topics of the training sessions included addressing communication skills, active listening, developing self-awareness, problem solving, effective working relationships, and changing work roles. The facility also worked with VHQC to provide training for both CNA staff and supervisory staff. The topics included understanding team building, team member communications, consistent assignment, and tracking CNA skills. By the end of the first grant year, the residents of the facility had 21 consecutive weeks of no pressure sores and 13 weeks without any resident falls. The facility attributes this increase in the quality of care to enhanced training provided to both direct care staff and supervisors.

***Peer Mentor Program*** - A new peer mentoring program was implemented for training new direct care staff and coaching direct care staff experiencing performance issues. Two peer mentors were selected and trained. The training curriculum included modules such as introduction to peer mentoring, developing self awareness, giving constructive feedback, problem solving, and coaching for improved performance. During the first year of *Virginia Gold*, the mentors trained 22 new CNAs and 18 have remained employed with the facility. The plan for the second year is to add four new peer mentors to their program. The two seasoned employees who are Lead CNAs will continue in their roles.

**CNA Screening and Interviewing** - Administrative staff recognized opportunities for improvement within the CNA hiring process including CNA screening, interviewing, and hiring techniques. As a result, the facility plans to implement a new panel interview process to include participation of lead CNAs and human resource staff. The facility administration plans to purchase new computer software to include on-line CNA screening tools not available in the past.

## **FRANCIS MARION MANOR (FMM) IN MARION**

Francis Marion Manor in Marion is a for-profit facility with 109 beds and 67% of residents are Medicaid participants. The facility employs 42 CNAs out of 70 direct care staff and at the time of their initial proposal had a CNA turnover rate of 65% with the goal to reduce it to 55%.

### ***PROGRAM STRATEGIES AND OUTCOMES:***

**BEST CNA Advancement** - BEST stands for “Best Excellence Shining Through”. This program is a multi-level incentive based program that rewards CNAs for professionalism and excellence in clinical bed side patient care. Eleven (11) CNA staff members participated in the program during the first *Virginia Gold* year.

**“Go for the Gold”** – This is a multi-faceted quality improvement project designed to explore and implement strategies to create and enhance a more supportive workplace environment and reduce CNA turnover. An interdisciplinary team comprised of three (3) sub-committee’s was formed to focus on Orientation, Communication and Recognition all of which were identified through self-assessment as areas of emphasis and are identified in more detail as follows.

**Enhance Orientation and Training** – A CNA Training Manual was developed to provide consistent experiences for new CNAs. In addition, an Administrative LPN was hired to facilitate CNA scheduling and to provide an enhancement to the orientation process. The Administrative LPN connects with each new CNA team member during orientation to identify additional training needs and provides continued support beyond orientation. As a result, the RN who previously handled these tasks has time to focus more on resident care and quality improvement initiatives. A two day seminar was offered at the local hospital for CNA staff who participated in an in-depth leadership and team building training.

**Communication** – “Walking rounds” were introduced which is a CNA to CNA shift report done at the end of each shift, so as to pass on necessary resident information to the next shift. Prior to this implementation, only the LPN staff received this communication. Additionally, a new model of care called “consistent assignment” was initiated on one unit of the facility which involves CNA staff consistently assigned to the same residents on the unit, so as to provide continuity of care. The goal is to improve and build on relationships between caregivers, residents, and families.

**Recognition and Awards to CNA staff** –Throughout the year initiatives such as “Star Cards” (peer to peer recognition) and “Team Member of the Month” were offered to

CNA staff. Another reward process, called “Spot Awards” is a way to acknowledge CNA staff members who go above and beyond expectations and who have made a positive impact on residents and staff satisfaction, as a result of resident or staff feedback.

**Visits to “Five Star” Nursing Facilities** - In the past year, staff at this facility visited “five star” facilities to identify examples of culture change and performance improvement that could be implemented at Francis Marion Manor. “Five Star” nursing facilities have a low number of citations and deficiencies during annual licensure inspections conducted by the Virginia Department of Health (VDH). The VDH inspectors typically conduct annual inspections of each licensed nursing facility in Virginia. Facilities having “five star” ratings meet requirements in regard to staffing, environmental concerns, and quality of care issues.

## **TRINITY MISSION HEALTH AND REHABILITATION CENTER**

Trinity Mission Health and Rehabilitation Center in Charlottesville is a for-profit facility with 180 beds and 70% of the residents are Medicaid participants. At the time of the initial proposal, the facility had 99 CNAs out of 219 staff with a CNA turnover rate of 53.8% with a facility goal to reduce this percentage to 40.3%.

### ***PROGRAM STRATEGIES AND OUTCOMES***

**CNA Staff Retention Team** – At the beginning of the grant year, a CNA survey was administered to obtain the perspective of CNAs in staff retention and job satisfaction. The results of the survey were used to establish program priorities. A CNA staff retention team was developed to initiate improvement in training, interviewing, and recognition programs that were identified as priorities through the survey results.

**Interview Roundtable** – A CNA Retention Team was developed to initiate improvement in screening, training, interviewing, and other identified priorities. The CNA Retention Team had active involvement in hiring dependable CNA staff by conducting the initial interview as a panel with 3 to 4 CNAs participating. Other strategies implemented or continued each quarter include the use of a staff suggestion box, action taken on staff suggestions received, and exit interviews being conducted with departing staff to explore reasons for leaving and to discuss available options to increase staff satisfaction.

**Enhanced CNA Staff Training** – CNA staff were provided with enhanced skills training opportunities throughout the year. By the end of the fourth quarter, 100% of the CNA staff had participated in in-service training sessions on various areas of resident care, including ADL care, pain control, skin care, and prevention of pressure ulcers, to name a few.

**CNA Participation in Team Care Plan Meetings** - Facility administration is working to involve CNA staff in team care plan meetings. Team care plan meetings are held to discuss the current status of the resident and include all of the interdisciplinary staff such as nursing, therapy, dietary, social work, activity, the resident and their family. To date, 25 CNAs have participated in resident care planning meetings. All 25 CNAs received training before attending

the care plan meetings. The families in attendance appreciated the valuable input the CNAs provided regarding the residents daily care. Administrative and nursing staff continue to develop strategies to involve weekend and night shift CNA staff in the team meetings that typically occurs during the day shift.

**Peer Mentoring Program** – The facility provided an enhanced staff orientation and implemented a CNA Peer Mentoring Program and a CNA Career Ladder opportunity. The selection criteria for the six CNA peer mentors chosen were based on CNA attendance, job performance, and leadership abilities. Each CNA mentor received a new job description and attended specialized training on peer mentoring, communication skills, mediation, and conflict resolution.

**Awards and Recognition** – A number of programs have been established to recognize the contributions of CNA staff. The “CNA of the Month” award is an incentive based on peer recognition; “Caught in the Act” gives an opportunity for supervisory staff to recognize CNA staff when they have gone above and beyond requirements. There is also a “Best New CNA” award that recognizes new CNA staff after the first 90 days of employment.

**Consistent Assignment** - Implementation of the consistent assignment model of care was initiated on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor unit (60 residents) in June 2010. Consistent assignment involves CNA staff consistently assigned to the same residents on each unit, so as to provide continuity of care. The goal is to improve and build on relationships between caregivers, residents, and families. Plans are to expand consistent assignment to another unit during the second year of the *Virginia Gold* grant.

## SUMMARY

This interim *Virginia Gold* report demonstrates the grantees objectives, strategies and initiatives implemented during the grant year, and the ongoing desire of the *Virginia Gold* grantees to improve in the areas of staff retention, skill levels, communication, cultural diversity, and employee recognition for services provided, all of which improves resident care and overall staff morale.

Overall, some of the grantees have reduced CNA turnover as compared with the same time last year and others have remained at about the same rate of turnover. Although there is a minimal turnover difference overall, the grantees expressed confidence that the activities and training offered throughout the year have been well received by staff and have proved to be beneficial to staff morale and staff confidence. The five grantees are looking forward to another year of *Virginia Gold* initiatives toward the overall goal of reducing CNA turnover and retaining qualified and dedicated staff to serve the residents who rely upon them for quality care on a daily basis.