

Ottawa – Government Services branch

Listening to employees' needs supports top-notch client care



The Ottawa-Government Services branch of Bayshore

Home Health is dedicated to providing excellent client care as well as superb employee relations.

The branch has been operating for 18 years and works exclusively with home support and nursing clients referred by the Champlain Community Care Access Centre (CCAC), which serves the largest geographical area of all of Ontario's CCACs.

The branch covers a large part of Eastern Ontario: "The whole city of Ottawa right to Renfrew County, and on the other side to Lanark, Leeds and Grenville, to the eastern counties," says Area Director Wendy Alexander. Her branch works closely with Bayshore's Cornwall and Smiths Falls branches, which also serve the Champlain CCAC.

Located south of Ottawa near the airport, the branch has 27 administrative staff, 220 personal support workers and 80 nurses. "Our nurses are divided into geographic teams. We have five teams, and a wound care team that has 15 members. We have a very strong focus on wound care here in Ottawa," says Alexander. Three of the branch's nurses have completed the International Interprofessional Wound Care Course, and the branch also has five advanced practice wound/ostomy nurses.

For the past four years, the branch has operated a community care clinic in the western part of Ottawa, where CCAC clients receive medication infusions and wound care from a team of nurses. The branch also provides palliative care.

"We have a great relationship with our CCAC. I think we're known as an agency that really cares and does what it takes to deliver the services, even in challenging situations," says Alexander. To increase capacity and take on more referrals, the branch added a full-time staff coordinator and a full-time manager to its shift nursing program (previously, it had one part-time supervisor). "With that type of investment, service levels have more than doubled in size since last September, and it continues to grow," says Alexander.

The branch goes to great lengths to connect with its employees. It has two human resources professionals – one who works with personal support workers (PSWs) and the other with nurses – to support its open-door policy. All employees have a mailbox at the office, and they are encouraged to drop in for a coffee and catch up

Seated, left to right: Wendy Alexander, Sylvie Dumontet, Marisa Paradiso, Meghan O'Connor, Siobhain McCawley-Game, Ivor Martinez. Standing, left to right: Debbie Watt, Camille Duncan, Joanne Dix, Carol Ann Mancuso, Karen Rakowski, Kathleen Mogan, Michelle Crabbe, Suzanne Clairoux, Rebecca Scott, Sylvie Larabie, Lahiru Rathnayaka, Christine Pickup, Lynn Card.

on news. "Because our geographical area is so large, we also take in-service training and meetings to our workers, where it's convenient for them. We often partner with the CCAC or community resources like the Ottawa Hospital and hold meetings there," says Alexander. Managers of nurses and PSWs also hold team meetings in their respective cities, often including an educational component.

Other initiatives include a quarterly newsletter and a "Refer a Friend" program, in which staff who refer someone who is subsequently hired receive generous gratuities. Social events include movie days at a rented theatre and picnics, with as many as 100 employees and family members attending. The branch chooses an "Employee of the Month" who has gone beyond the call of duty – he or she receives a certificate, recognition in the office reception area and a small gratuity. The branch recently launched French-only staff orientation sessions to support new francophone employees, and it offers French lessons for English-speaking staff. Staff also raise funds for The Hospice at May Court, located in Ottawa. They raised \$5,000 last year, and hope to beat that in the 2011 Hike for Hospice Palliative Care.

"We have a great team. Our staff retention is very high – we're able to hire great people and keep them," says Alexander. "We've also been through a lot together." The best example is the OC Transpo transit strike, which occurred in the winter of 2008-09. The staff pulled together to continue serving clients although there was no bus service for 51 days. "Forty percent of our workers travel by bus, so the managers and everybody took turns driving – we developed a great carpool system," says Alexander. "We all got to know each other a little better!"

One of the branch's objectives for 2011 is to become an even better, more desirable workplace. "We want everyone to love getting out of bed in the morning and working for Bayshore," says Alexander. "We're all committed to making this a great place to work."

For more information, please contact walexander@bayshore.ca



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