



## Welcome to our eNewsletter

Quarterly e-newsletter for the Denver Health Lean Academy  
Issue 1, 2017

Thank you for signing up to receive the Denver Health Lean Academy e-newsletter! We are looking forward to discussing a variety of useful information, and offering insight into our own Lean journey at Denver Health. We hope to provide real life examples that can help guide you on your own path of improvement, and would love to hear from you as well. Feel free to share your thoughts and ask questions through our *YOU ASKED, WE ANSWERED* feature and keep the conversation flowing. Enjoy and happy reading!

### In This Issue

- Growing Business Through External Referrals
- The AIDET Kentucky Derby Challenge
- You asked? We Answered!

## Growing Business Through External Referrals

Not since the time of President Lincoln has Denver Health had a process to accept referrals into specialty care from external Primary Care Providers (PCPs). Historically, Denver Health's own PCPs feed work into specialty clinics making all referrals internal. In an effort to maximize the capacity and profitability of the specialty clinics, a team looked into what it would take to make a formal external referral process. The goal was to earn more business from our own employees, city employees and targeted specialty patients.

In May of 2015, Business Development teamed with Lean Systems Improvement to host a Value Stream Analysis. This was a large cross-functional event that included representatives from Operations, Nursing, Appointment Center, Marketing, Patient Experience, and Specialty Physicians. A value stream maps out the ideal state, then contrasts it to the current state in order to develop action plans to close the gap between the two. Because there wasn't an existing process, there was a lot of work to do. The Value Stream resulted in 10 Lean Events, 8 Projects and 7 Just Do It's. A monthly Steering committee was formed to review project status and metrics, and most importantly remove any barriers the team was running into.

Some accomplishments of these efforts include:

- Piloted with Colorado Coalition for the Homeless
- Approved a non-privileged provider ordering policy for Lab and Radiology
- Created an HIPAA compliant web-based referral form (launched mid-November)
- Created a new patient welcome packet
- Standardized process for referral guidelines, appointing and authorization
- Implemented Standard Practice for follow-up with referring provider

The project was an immediate success, proving that there was demand in the community for Denver Health to open up access to specialty care. There was very limited advertising or promotion, but volumes went up immediately.

Denver Health found success by expanding their external referral process through Lean efforts, and also engaged staff with a fun challenge that improved patient experience by using Lean Visual Management Boards!



## You Asked?

Dear Denver Health,

We are working on creating a team that is dedicated to the new lean program at our organization. Our challenge has been defining roles within the team. So, I was wondering, what does the structure of your Lean team/department look like?

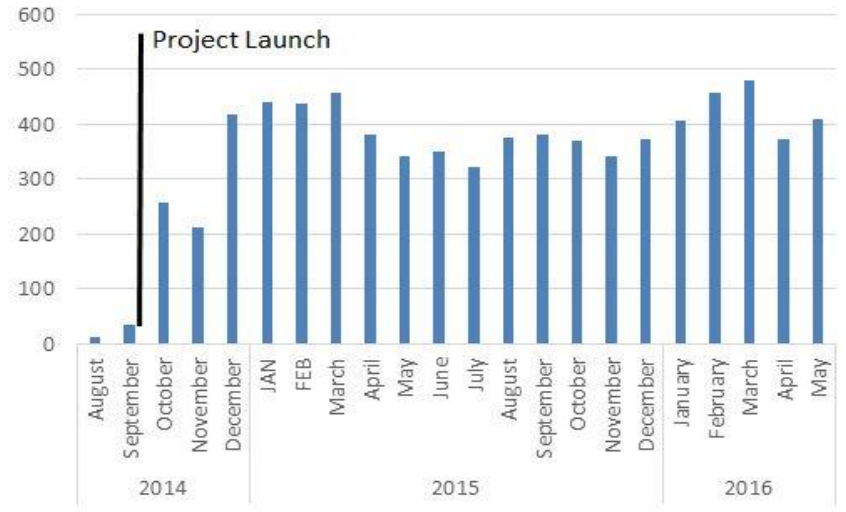
Signed,  
"Looking for Structure"

## We Answered!

Dear "Looking for Structure",

At Denver Health we have a department that is dedicated to deploying lean management across the institution. The **Lean Systems Improvement** team has 13 employees with different roles and responsibilities. The team is led by a **Director of Strategic Services** who works with executive leadership to set a "true north" vision and a strategy for achieving that vision. We also have an **Assistant Director** who manages the daily operations of our team and ensures that we are successful in our

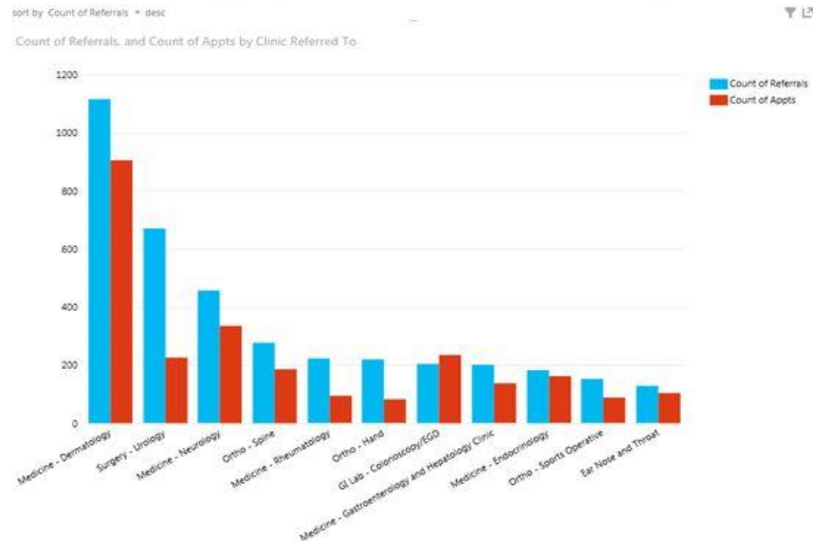
## Number of External Referrals



Metrics were used for 12 months after launch to track progress and identify if there were any problems. The graphs represent metrics that were tracked and displayed on the visual management board for review, and helped identify which services had the biggest community need so we could react to it and ensure the program was heading in the right direction.

The external referral project is a great example of a project that identified a problem, its barriers, and set a clear goal of what success would look like. This allowed for a multidisciplinary cross functional team who placed less emphasis on specific roles within the organization and more emphasis on communication and working together to accomplish an organizational goal.

## External Referrals - Clinics referred to



deployment.

Our “frontline” staff includes: **Lean Coordinators**, **Lean Facilitators**, and **Senior Lean Facilitators** who report to the Assistant Director. The creation of these roles has encouraged professional development and growth within the team.

The Lean Coordinator role serves as an entry level support role to help with project management, time studies/observations, and general administrative and documentation responsibilities.

Lean Facilitators serve as vital resources for the development of Denver Health employees through our coaching model and facilitation of Lean events that drive improvement activities. As Lean Facilitators advance their knowledge and skills, they have the opportunity to become Senior Lean Facilitators. These team members take on more complex events and coaching assignments and also assist with strategy and leadership development work.

The department also includes a **Project Specialist**, **Project Coordinator**, and **Project Administrator**. These team members each have a dedicated focus in areas such as: coordinating the *Lean Academy*, organizing work to support building a case for *operational excellence* (i.e. the Baldrige Award, Shingo Award, etc.), and managing the *enterprise performance management tool* which helps us to track metrics for the organization.

Our team collaborates with *Business Development* and *Organizational Development and Learning* to ensure that we are taking an interdisciplinary approach to supporting organization needs while ensuring alignment with our strategic plan.

This structure has gone through many evolutions in the course of our Lean Journey at Denver Health. I encourage you to think about the immediate needs of your organization and who needs to be part of that work. Ask yourself, “How can we deploy Lean in a way that drives the greatest opportunity for improvement work?”

## The AIDET Kentucky Derby Challenge

The fundamental pillars of Lean are respect for people and continuous improvement. A commitment to continuous Improvement can be demonstrated by using A3 thinking, visual management, and leader standard work to get into a rhythm of solving problems. Behaviors that demonstrate respect for people are equally, if not more important, but can be difficult to practice every day. Here is an example of how it was done at Denver Health's Eastside and Westside Women's Care Clinics.

The Nurse Program Manager, in conjunction with her Charge Nurses and Project Specialist, has been engaged in lean management since 2013. They've learned much through experimenting with lean tools and using visual management. The greatest success comes not just from working through the elements of A3 thinking, but actually engaging the team in the A3 development and implementation.

Patient experience has been at the forefront of improvement efforts at Denver Health. When it came to hardwiring AIDET (Acknowledge, Introduce, Duration, Explanation, Thank You), a standard approach to introductions for staff, that's exactly what the team set out to accomplish. Concerned when data showed the Women's Care Clinic staff were not using AIDET with patients 100% of the time, the Nurse Program Manager rallied the Charge Nurses & Project Specialist to start an A3 and come up with something fun to focus attention on AIDET and its importance. Suddenly, the entire Women's Care Clinic staff was engaged in a Kentucky Derby style AIDET challenge conducting informal AIDET observations of each other.

This fun, staff-owned accountability system drove improvement. In the end, patient surveys indicated 97% of all staff at Eastside and 95% of all staff at Westside were using AIDET. So follow their lead: engage your staff and make improvement lighthearted and fun. Healthcare is a serious business but the way we make things better doesn't have to be.

Good luck with your journey!

Signed,  
YAWE (You Asked, We Answered)

## What Questions Do YOU Have?

[Submit your question and be featured in an upcoming issue of our e-newsletter!](#)

## Helpful Links

- [Register for a Lean Workshop](#)
- [Learn More About Lean workshops](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

## About Us

Denver Health is one of the first healthcare organizations to successfully adopt Lean as an improvement methodology with quantified success. The Denver Health Lean Academy teaches the methods that we use in a hands-on learning experience suitable for participants at all levels. Denver Health is Colorado's primary safety net institution, providing comprehensive, integrated care for all, regardless of ability to pay.



Thank you for taking the time to check out our first issue, see you again soon!

