



SUCCESS STORY

Customer Service: Improving Client Satisfaction at Private Health Facilities

Clients' feelings and needs are not always considered at private health facilities in Benin, according to a rapid assessment conducted in 2016.¹ In fact, clients find a visit to a private health facility to be a significant waste of time. In 16 private health clinics in Cotonou, the assessment showed that the average wait time over a five-day period ranged from 52 to 126 minutes.

Aware of the problems faced by private health facilities, the Association of Private Clinics in Benin (ACPB) asked the Advancing Newborn, Child and Reproductive Health (ANCRE) program to provide training to their members so they could better serve their clients' needs.

To respond to these concerns, ANCRE conducted a series of trainings on customer service. A total of 168 staff members from 16 private health facilities attended the trainings. Participants also took advantage of these occasions to discuss other concerns, including: client identification, client reception (in person and by telephone), clinic signs, protection of client information, addressing client needs, and how to monitor client



The cashier at Point E Clinic welcomes a client

satisfaction. Practical application during the training sessions allowed the participants to appreciate the client relationship no matter what their healthcare role, whether receptionist, nurse, doctor, or technician.

Since the training sessions, private health facility managers have introduced meaningful changes in client intake processes.

¹ A rapid assessment was conducted in December 2016 for 16 facilities that attended 'Customer service' trainings in January and March 2016.

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— Clinique Biosso secretary

At the Clinique de l’Union, the staff added a new sign, painted the waiting room and hallways, and created a checklist for staff to examine prior to interacting with clients. The Atinkanmey Clinic also made aesthetic changes, created directional signs for clients, and created a unit where providers come together as a team to monitor client care and treatment and encourage each other to improve client relationships. At the Boni d’Akpakpa Clinic, staff repaired three telephone lines and added a phone number that permits clients to more easily reach the clinic. The Fandina Clinic installed a tracking system for health providers to better communicate during shift changes, thereby building a stronger team and enabling better tracking of clients’ medical files. The secretary at the Biosso Clinic confirms that the training has resulted in success for clinic staff and clients, stating, “We live with less stress now; clients don’t sulk or get frustrated like before.”

To provide better client services, most clinics also reorganized their staffing schedules to avoid tardiness and gaps in service. They have started using text messaging to remind clients of appointments and to check on client progress after treatment. At the Point E Clinic, a staff meeting is held every morning, allowing staff to remind each other of their role in providing good service and facilitating team building. As the secretary at Point E Clinic stated, “...we are seeing clearly that repeat clients are happy with their previous visit—it shows in how they greet us and in their calm demeanor and smiles.”

The actions taken following the training sessions have brought about other encouraging changes to the clinics. There has been a focus on keeping areas of the clinic clean and hygienic and eliminating odors. In most of the participating clinics, there is a better client reception system, including more efficient appointment planning, which has reduced waiting times. Clients with



A laboratory technician at the Biosso Clinic draws blood from a patient for laboratory analysis.

appointments wait only five minutes on average. In addition, many of the participating clinics have improved their client payment system. In short, the concerns of clients are a priority for clinic staff.

With these changes and improvements in client communication, client relationships have dramatically improved in the clinics. Staff report a decrease in complaints and have received positive feedback from clients. Even former clients have returned following the changes. “Before, there were regular problems at the payment desk and in the waiting room, because clients were being neglected. They (clients) would quite often complain that they weren’t getting enough attention by health providers. Now, everything is much better – health providers welcome clients or the cashier welcomes the clients and takes care of them while they wait,” says the Director of the Clinique de l’Union.

The customer service training fulfilled a true need in the clinics and has had a positive effect. Clinics are focusing on providing quality care to their clients—starting from when they enter the clinic until they leave and, in some cases, beyond.

Private health facilities are in need—and want—training to help them improve quality of their services. Customer service training is one of the answers.

Advancing Newborn, Child and Reproductive Health (ANCRE) program

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