

A LOOK AT DELIVERING

Quality Care

Interviews by **Kimberly Paetzold**, Editor



Rainbow is considered an industry leader in providing comprehensive rehabilitation services for adults and children with traumatic brain injuries. How is this accomplished? It starts with hiring good, caring professionals and implementing programs and procedures that are successful, flexible and always improving. Recently, I interviewed Sherri McDaniel, C.O.O, vice president and director of human resources at Rainbow, Sean Youngren, vice president and director of administrative services for Rainbow and Chuck Wiseman, adult foster care licensing consultant for the state of Michigan. They provided insight into Rainbow's high standards of providing quality care and rehabilitation. Here's what they said ...

Finding good employees is crucial to providing quality care to individuals with traumatic brain injuries. The better the staff delivering services, the more likely the clients will be successful. Rainbow prides itself on providing quality delivery of care, and that translates into having a great staff of professionals.

Q. How are Rainbow's hiring practices unique in the industry?

A. *Sherri McDaniel:* Rainbow's employee turnover is very low compared to industry averages, and that's because we start by hiring qualified candidates. Hiring well translates into fewer employee injuries, fewer investigations, better staff interaction

and better client/employee relationships. How is this accomplished? At Rainbow we pride ourselves on ...

- requiring a two-interview process for every position to compare answers from interview to interview
- creating professionally designed interview questions that indicate whether candidates will be compatible with our TBI population
- interviewing every applicant the same way, so they are judged by the same criteria.

Once an individual is hired, they are required to attend a five-day classroom-style training course held by brain injury professionals. New employees have to test out of certain skills such as wheelchair tie-downs and patient transfers. Once official training is complete, a "buddy system" is implemented where new hires are linked with experienced staff. This "hands on" training lasts from two days to a week depending on competency. Essential skills must be accomplished repetitively, and the trainer (buddy) must sign off on mastered job skills.

We follow all state hiring guidelines, which include running criminal background checks and fingerprinting, but we also run additional checks beyond the state's requirements. The state of Michigan requires two personal references for individuals caring for adults and three for

those taking care of children. At Rainbow we take that requirement much further by requiring 10 years of employment checks to help us understand each applicant. If we followed the guidelines set by the state, we estimate an additional 20 percent more applicants would be accepted that we currently turn down. For every 200 applicants that apply at Rainbow, we usually hire only one or two because of rigorous screening.

To keep skills fresh, we perform annual recertifications for all employees in many areas of care including safety, wheelchair tie-downs, CPI and restraints, to name just a few.

Q. Hiring good employees is part of the equation, but what other factors make it possible for Rainbow to consistently provide quality care that meets and exceeds the state of Michigan's standards?

A. *Sean Youngren:* We have an open-door policy to state regulators and interested third parties. If anybody in the organization sees something that they don't believe is in the best interest of a client or the organization as a whole, they can come to us and report it. All reported issues receive a thorough investigation.

Sherri McDaniel: All of our names and numbers are on a phone list published to all employees, and the executive staff is

accessible 24/7 for complaints. Individuals who want to talk about their concerns contact our management team on a regular basis, and this approach works. It allows us to really gather critical information about what's going on with our clients.

We also take a very aggressive approach to investigations. This means neutralizing a situation right away by removing employees when complaints are filed against them. If an issue involves client rights, which includes their care, health and well being, we immediately suspend an employee. Any employee mistreatment of clients is taken very seriously including small infractions – such as sending clients to their rooms, touching their wheelchairs and calling them or their family member a name.

When we suspend a care provider and the allegation is proven to be false, we will pay the employee for their time off. This process makes certain that our clients are always protected.

Sean Youngren: We are not afraid to call the state of Michigan and self-report when

appropriate, and this philosophy has gone a long way in establishing a respect with the state of Michigan inspectors. They trust that we're going to do the right thing by neutralizing the situation, making sure the clients are safe and making sure that the state is notified when appropriate.

Q. How does Rainbow work with the Adult and the Child Care Licensing in the state of Michigan if someone has a valid complaint?

A. Sean Youngren: We allow the state to take charge. We provide them with all documentation and full access to clients and staff members. At this point, the state Licensing will work in conjunction with Adult Protective Services, if necessary. They are two separate governmental entities that often coordinate services.

When appropriate, we generate and provide a corrective action plan to address the situation so that it doesn't happen again. If a valid complaint includes employee-generated abuse, neglect or

any other breach of duties, appropriate actions up to and including termination are implemented as part of the corrective action plan.

Sherri McDaniel: No organization is perfect, because people sometimes make mistakes. Any organization that says differently is clearly misguided. We take pride that we hire well and train to prevent problems, but occasionally, something does go wrong. This spurs us to take a critical look at our systems from start to finish. We evaluate policies and hiring and make the necessary changes to procedural processes. Often, any corrective action plans are usually already in process before the state of Michigan even walks through the door. We do not sit back and wait for them to tell us to change.

Sean Youngren: We're certainly are our own toughest critics.

In addition to Sean and Sherri's comments, Chuck Wisman of the state's Department of Human Services offers his perspective on Rainbow's delivery of care and procedure for handling complaints against staff.

Rainbow was invited by the state of Michigan to perform self-audits on select residential facilities. Participation in the pilot program requires a superior record with the state of Michigan with no major licensing infractions. Selection in this program speaks to Rainbow's excellence as an organization.



Q. We have heard how to deliver quality care and services from the perspective of Rainbow personnel, but now let's hear an industry perspective. Chuck Wisman from the state of Michigan's Department of Human Services was kind enough to interview with us. Chuck, could you tell us a little about your responsibilities and how the licensing process works?

A. I work with the Department of Human Services, which directs the operations of public assistance and service programs in Michigan including my department – Adult Foster Care & Homes for the Aged. Consultants like myself inspect facilities and help maintain the rules from Michigan's Public Act 218, and I am part

of the process that provides regulatory enforcement. The maximum facility size I inspect is 20 beds, and I am required to inspect each group home every two years. I cover all of Washtenaw County and part of Jackson County – about 104 facilities.

There are three aspects to receiving a license for an adult foster home in Michigan. First is quality of care – care provided by the licensee to the resident. Second is environmental standards, and third is fire safety, which involves the overall safety of the premises.

The majority of homes I inspect are self-regulated. That is, they maintain high standards and compliance to the law, and in many cases, they go beyond requirements. But as with any industry, there is a percentage that gets into the business looking only for profit. I find when providers don't have an emotional attachment to their patients, they often lack in providing quality care.

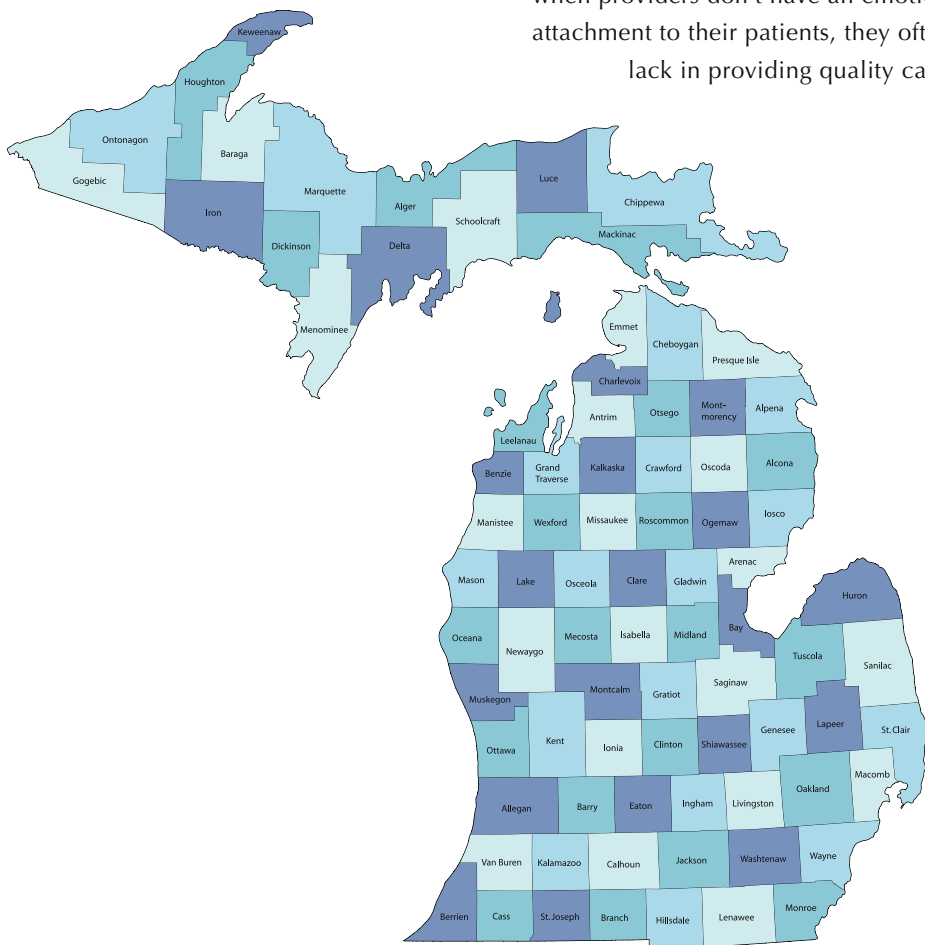
Q. What if a family member or loved one finds himself or herself in a situation where they do not feel quality care is being provided at a facility?

A. If you find you have a patient or loved one in a facility that you feel is not meeting licensing standards or not providing quality care, you have the right to file a "complaint." When we receive a complaint, we complete a physical inspection and investigation. In my position, complaints take the highest priority, and most are regarding patient care by either staff or the licensee. Many alleged violations are of resident rights, allegations of abuse or neglect, or violations of licensing rules regarding issues such as medication administration. All complaints are investigated unless they are not related to licensing rules. The person filing the complaint is not responsible for understanding the rules, they just have to voice their concerns.

When we complete our investigation, we decide whether or not to produce an official "citation." This requires a preponderance evidence, that is, we must be convinced of guilt more than 50 percent. If I feel that this is the case, then I will provide a citation to the facility – I do not cite individual staff.

A facility receiving a citation must provide a written plan of correction. If the violation is serious and we find the plan of correction adequate, we may recommend a provisional license, good for six months. Most licensees come up with great ways to resolve issues. With a provisional license, unannounced inspections are completed to see how the facility is progressing. If violations are not corrected, we may recommend revocation.

Repetitive, noncompliance to licensing regulations is serious. When a facility is



cited repeatedly and does not produce corrective action, we can revoke a facility's license to do business. We can also cite certain deficiencies in the facilities through a "notice of finding" instead of a citation for minor violations. For example, a facility might need to fix the dishwasher, but I feel a citation in this case is too drastic. I can provide a notice of finding listing the items to be corrected. A notice of finding does not show up on the Web site, but is available via the Freedom of Information Act.

Q. How does Rainbow perform on meeting the state's licensing standards?

A. Over the years Rainbow has performed exceedingly well meeting licensing standards and even going beyond. There have been very few issues of violations over the years. When you look at other programs that provide services to persons who have traumatic brain injuries, Rainbow hires high-quality staff with good qualifications and education, and that commitment shows.

Q. Is there any additional information you would like to share with our readers?

A. Yes, I would like to recommend that families be assertive in making sure their loved one receives adequate care. I can make sure a facility is clean and following the state regulations, but that doesn't guarantee good care. You want to look for an environment that not only looks nice, but also provides care by qualified individuals. You have to find a balance. I always emphasize that family members and advocates be assertive, and if issues cannot be resolved in the home, then contact Licensing or case management. ❖