



For more details, please read the full [case study](#) of the Eliza Jennings Wellness Clinics conducted in June 2014.



The LeadingAge Center for Affordable Housing Plus Services serves as a national catalyst for the development, adoption and support of innovative affordable housing solutions that enable low- and modest-income seniors to age safely and successfully in their homes and communities.

To learn more about the center, see www.LeadingAge.org/Center_for_Housing_Plus_Services.

Eliza Jennings Wellness Clinics in Affordable Senior Housing

Lakewood, Ohio

Introduction

Staff members at Eliza Jennings in Lakewood, OH, observed that several older adults living at nearby Westerly Apartments were making repeat visits to the organization's skilled nursing and rehabilitation settings following repeated hospital stays. It appeared to the Eliza Jennings staff that many residents were returning to the hospital because they lacked a good support system to help them effectively manage their recovery at home.

The not-for-profit Eliza Jennings approached the management of the Westerly Apartments to propose that the two organizations collaborate on an initiative to better support residents so they could successfully age in place.

Initially, Eliza Jennings offered outpatient physical and occupational therapy at Westerly Apartments, a 498-unit property owned by Lakewood Senior Citizens, Inc. Next, the aging services provider began delivering home health services to support residents after they returned home from a hospital or skilled nursing stay. After learning that many Westerly residents were not well connected to their primary care physicians (PCP), Eliza Jennings opened an onsite wellness clinic to help residents better address and manage their ongoing health care needs.

Eliza Jennings currently operates wellness clinics at four senior affordable housing properties, in addition to Westerly Apartments:

- *Kirby Manor*, a 147-unit property owned by National Church Residences.
- *Knickerbocker Apartments*, a 168-unit property owned by Lakewood Senior Citizens, Inc.
- *Fedor Manor Apartments*, a 145-unit property sponsored by SS. Cyril & Methodist Church.
- *Clifton Plaza Apartments*, a 108-unit property managed by ABC Management.

Four more are in the planning stages.

Wellness Clinic Services

The Eliza Jennings wellness clinics offer a variety of services, including:

- **Primary and Urgent Care:** Nurse Practitioners (NP) and Registered Nurses (RN) are available during clinic hours to diagnose and treat residents' urgent health care needs or ongoing chronic conditions. A clinic's NPs can serve as a resident's PCP or as a liaison to the PCP if the resident has one. Clinic staff also help residents learn how to control their health conditions and adopt healthy behaviors.
- **Wellness and Prevention:** Clinic staff will check residents' vital signs, review prescriptions to ensure medication compliance, answer health-related questions, or provide one-on-one education to help residents manage a chronic illness or follow a doctor's instructions. The wellness clinic staff also coordinates group health education talks and activities, often in collaboration with the service coordinator.
- **Care Coordination, Navigation and Transitional Care:** Members of the clinic staff help residents coordinate their health and supportive service needs and navigate the health care system. Staff might help residents make physician appointments, schedule lab work and other tests, or obtain durable medical equipment. They can also help to ensure that residents safely transition back home following hospital or inpatient rehabilitation stays.
- **Supportive Services:** A "Helping Hands" program at Westerly and Knickerbocker apartments gives residents access to private-duty homemaker assistance, including help with laundry or cleaning, at an affordable rate. In addition, Eliza Jennings staff members purchase groceries and pick up prescriptions for residents through a weekly shopping assistance program. Certified nursing assistants staff both programs.
- **Home Health Care and Therapy:** Eliza Jennings provides skilled home health care services in resident apartments, and skilled rehabilitation therapy in Westerly's central office space or in an individual's home. A physician must order all of these services and residents can select Eliza

Jennings as their provider. Typically, residents use these services following a hospital or inpatient skilled nursing stay or in response to a specific need, such as wound care or to improve balance and gait.

Wellness Clinic Structure

The Eliza Jennings clinics are open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Residents can schedule appointments with an NP or RN, or simply drop in to check vital signs, ask questions or receive one-on-one education.

Clinic Staff

Each wellness clinic has a dedicated, full-time clinic manager. NPs and RNs spread their time across all of the Eliza Jennings wellness clinics and the organization's skilled home health care program. NPs and RNs see residents in the clinic or in their apartments. Allowable NP visits are billed to Medicare, while RN visits are generally provided at no charge.

A clinic manager carries out administrative tasks like scheduling and billing, helps residents monitor their vital signs, and arranges physician appointments and lab work. The manager also works with housing property staff to coordinate supportive services programs and schedule health education programs.

Clinic Budget

Clinics are funded through the budget of the home and community-based services division at Eliza Jennings, which includes the wellness clinics, skilled home health care and therapy services. Essentially, the clinics are supported directly by the billable services provided in the clinic, and indirectly by the billable services and shared staffing provided through the skilled home health care and therapy programs.

A new demonstration program called MyCare Ohio may provide an additional funding mechanism for the clinics. The program, funded through the Financial Alignment Initiative administered by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, consolidates into one managed care plan all of the health and long-term services and support benefits paid for by Medicare and Medicaid for individuals who are eligible for both programs.

Eliza Jennings is working to demonstrate that its wellness

clinics can play an important role in helping MyCare Ohio health plans manage care for older residents of affordable housing properties. Many of these residents are part of the dual-eligible population that MyCare Ohio targets.

Clinic Expenses

Eliza Jennings pays rent to use housing property space for two of its five clinics. Clinics use rent-free space in three housing properties. Utilities—including trash pickup, water and electricity—typically are paid for by the housing property.

Eliza Jennings covers the cost of modifying a new clinic space so that residents and clinicians can meet privately, confidential patient records can be stored securely, and clinic staff members have access to a Wi-Fi network. The organization carries commercial general liability insurance and ensures that all members of the clinic staff have appropriate professional liability insurance.

Perceived Program Benefits

Perceived benefits associated with the Eliza Jennings wellness clinics include:

- **Lower Health Care Utilization:** Compared with the broader Ohio population, emergency department use and hospital readmissions are lower for older adults utilizing the onsite Eliza Jennings clinics.
- **Ease of Access:** Residents who do not drive or have cars may miss medical appointments because public transit is too difficult or costly to use. A housing-based clinic gives residents a way to address health care issues while saving on transportation costs.
- **Flexible Scheduling:** Residents can often see a clinic staff person much sooner than they could schedule an appointment with a PCP. This timely scheduling is significant for residents with a potentially urgent care need or a need that could quickly become urgent.
- **Continuity of Care:** Clinic staff members believe that accessible, flexible and free clinic services allow for greater continuity of care, which leads to better management of chronic conditions.
- **Holistic Support:** Eliza Jennings staff often work like case managers and help address resident

needs from a holistic perspective. Clinic staff can sometimes identify or access community-based services and resources more quickly than a property's service coordinator. This is particularly advantageous in properties where the service coordinator may not have as strong a knowledge of community services.

Perceived Program Challenges

Perceived challenges associated with the Eliza Jennings wellness clinics include:

- **Service and Resource Gaps:** Despite the many services offered through the wellness clinics, some gaps in available services and resources continue to affect residents' ability to age in place. These gaps include a shortage of mental health-related services, a lack of onsite space for physical activity, unmet needs for help with day-to-day chores, and challenges for residents whose monthly incomes do not adequately cover food costs.
- **Staffing:** Eliza Jennings operates in a market with other prominent health care organizations that are able to pay higher wages. This makes it difficult for the organization to attract and maintain clinical staff. In response, Eliza Jennings focuses on identifying potential employees who are a good "fit" with its clinic operations and mission. Eliza Jennings has learned that good clinic staff is key to attracting and retaining resident participation. Residents value being able to form trusting relationships with the clinic providers.
- **Residents Acceptance of Services:** Some residents worry that they will have to move if family members or the housing staff see them using the onsite wellness clinic. Others are reluctant to use services like adult day health and congregate meals due to a perceived stigma associated with using social services. Respect for the professional credentials of clinic staff, and the development of trusting relationships between staff and residents, can sometimes help residents understand the importance of using recommended services.

- **Partner Relations:** Residents must give their permission before clinic and housing staff can share personal information about them. Even when partners have this permission, however, it can be challenging to identify the appropriate balance of information shared about residents. In addition, the service coordinator's buy-in and collaboration with the clinic staff is a key element of the clinic's success.

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