TECHNOLOGY IN PRACTICE

PERSON-CONNECTED AND DATA-DRIVEN: MEETING IT NEEDS AT THE ELDERCARE LOCATOR

The Eldercare Locator is a nationwide service that connects older adults and their caregivers with information on aging services, programs, and resources. Funded by the U.S. Administration on Aging, an agency of the Administration for Community Living, and administered by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a), the Eldercare Locator is operated through a call center and through access to a public website. With growing call volume and increasingly complex calls, the Eldercare Locator needed an information technology (IT) staff structure that could support effective and efficient service as well as produce data and analytics to inform its work. To meet this need, the position of Coordinator of Information Technology and Analytics was created in 2016.

Background

In 2016, the Eldercare Locator's call center reached a new record of over 300,000 requests for assistance. The Eldercare Locator also receives inquiries by email and chat. Not only has call volume increased, but the number of complex or crisis calls, and the number of calls to report suspected elder abuse, have increased as well. Additionally, the IT systems used by the Eldercare Locator—mirroring national trends—have become more sophisticated, calling for greater expertise to administer. The Eldercare Locator, for example, implemented an after-hours self-service interactive voice response (IVR) system in 2016 to help address the increased call volume. The Eldercare Locator had an IT staff lead but the position lacked a formal structure and this staff person, while bringing considerable skill and expertise to the role, was pulled in multiple directions due to other responsibilities.

To be able to efficiently respond to the Eldercare Locator's high call volume, to strengthen the capacity to provide high-quality service, and to improve the ability to report on I&R

data and impacts, the Eldercare Locator created the position of Coordinator of Information Technology and Analytics through a restructuring of staff positions. As this was not a brand new position, no new funding was required. Through the staff restructuring, key IT and analytics functions were pulled together into a designated and formal staff position. Responsibilities of this position include:

- Coordinating information technology projects related to the Eldercare Locator service;
- Implementing IT solutions and ensuring that computer and telephone systems are operating at optimal levels;
- Evaluating workflow processes;
- Analyzing trends and forecasts for technology needs;
- Managing resource information development and maintenance;
- Producing statistical reports and data metrics; and
- Supporting staff development, training, and coaching relating to technology systems and data entry.

Implementation

Since implementation in 2016, the position of Coordinator of IT and Analytics has given the Eldercare Locator's IT staff lead the structure and organization to be able to focus on critical IT needs and resources. At the same time, this position has built-in flexibility to allow the Coordinator of IT and Analytics to respond to diverse IT-related needs. Additionally, the position has provided important leadership to the Eldercare Locator's resource center team. This team works on IT issues, data reporting and analytics, resource development, and maintenance of the Eldercare Locator's online store of publications and brochures. Team members, including the Coordinator of IT and Analytics, also respond to Eldercare Locator calls and chats. This gives the team direct, on-the-ground experience with callers that is invaluable to informing the use of technology for I&R services.

Along with ensuring the effective operation of the Eldercare Locator's IT systems, the Coordinator of IT and Analytics plays important roles in resource development and in managing partnerships and vendor relationships. Maintaining accurate information on Area Agencies on Aging, state agencies, Adult Protective Services programs, and other key national and local providers is essential to the quality of the Eldercare Locator's service and online directory. Data generated by the resource center team also leads to new strategic partnerships that can expand resource information to better address callers' needs. For example, the Eldercare Locator is partnering with the U.S. Department of Justice's Elder Justice Initiative and other national partners in the coordination of updated resource information. The Coordinator of IT and Analytics works cooperatively with the Administration for Community Living to maintain data on the Eldercare.gov website, and works with IT vendors to help ensure the smooth operation of systems.

Impacts

The position of Coordinator of IT and Analytics formalized and enhanced a structure that has enabled the Eldercare Locator to better respond to technology needs and to produce the data, reports, and measurements that accurately reflect its work. The capacity for regular data reporting allows for consistent, ongoing measurement of key indicators. This

Key Data Findings

Data analytics capacity allows the Eldercare Locator to report on key national findings, such as the findings below from the 2016 Eldercare Locator Data Report.

- In 2016, the Eldercare Locator received 308,637 calls; 3,222 emails; and 1,922 chats.
- Transportation assistance and home and community based support were the most requested service needs that comprised 43% of all calls into the Eldercare Locator.
- Over 22,000 calls were handled as complex or crisis contacts.
- The number of calls to report suspected elder abuse has increased with over 7,000 calls received.
- Calls originated from every state, the District of Columbia and most U.S. Territories.
- Two thirds of callers are referred to their local Area Agency on Aging.

analytic capacity has helped to capture not only important changes in call volume but also changes in the nature of calls. This type of data is vital to informing resource development and to ensuring quality I&R services that are responsive to the needs of callers.

The Coordinator of IT and Analytics has also provided a locus for technology solutions and partnerships. Effective technology is a valuable tool in helping the Eldercare Locator to reach more individuals needing assistance and to improve the efficiency of the hundreds of calls received each day. By creating the position of Coordinator of IT and Analytics, the Eldercare Locator sought to strengthen its ability to provide high-quality I&R service and to effectively report on its impact. Implementing this position is proving to be an important component of achieving *person-connected and data-driven* I&R services.

Visit the Eldercare Locator at *http://www.eldercare.acl.gov*