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THE GOOD LIFE

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How LifePath's Person-Centered Approach and Collaboration Supported Leroy

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Melissa Hatch

The Home Care program is focused on providing high-quality services and case

management, but to do that, we also need to practice good collaboration. Good collaboration can happen between the Home Care Case Manager and our vendors, between Home Care and other LifePath departments, and between Home Care and external community supports.

To be eligible for the Home Care program, a consumer must be at least 60 years old (or they can be younger if they have an Alzheimer's or dementia diagnosis). Some consumers have already had years of bad experiences with human services organizations and feel defensive, defeated, and not open to anything new. This was the case for Leroy, a consumer who had been served by multiple agencies and services by the time Case Manager Jackie Cappuccio was assigned to him. She was unable to reach him by phone to schedule their first visit, so she called his homemaking aide to arrange to stop by his house when the aide would be there.

Jackie was nervous, but Leroy was welcoming. While he was less interested in adding more homemaking hours or personal care, Jackie noticed at her visit that he had a few items in need of replacement: his four-pronged cane was duct taped at the bottom, his chair that he slept in was broken, and his rollator walker was also broken. Home Care doesn't always have the financial capacity to make large purchases, but we were lucky this past spring to be able to order Leroy a new lift chair from our vendor Mass Surgical Supply in Holyoke. His need for the cane and rollator was more urgent, so Jackie called the Franklin County Sheriff's Office TRIAD program, a crime-prevention and wellness initiative aimed at protecting the safety and welfare of older adults, who were able to get him both of those items within a few days.

One of the goals of the Home Care program is to support our consumers with their goals. Leroy's biggest goal was being able to leave his house, which he could do with the new cane and rollator. Leroy also has edema in his legs, so the lift chair helps to keep the edema more manageable.

Jackie told Leroy she would order these items to replace what was broken, she did it, and he received them: This completed verbal agreement meant the world to him, creating a foundation of trust in their relationship. It also created an in for Jackie to help Leroy get a new phone, as he would need to be able to receive a call from Mass Surgical Supply to coordinate delivery of his items. Leroy also received help from LifePath employee Beth

Fogle, who was instrumental in helping Leroy to get the new phone and set it up. Beth was able to meet with Leroy more frequently than Jackie for this process, and she was able to help with Leroy's care coordination in other areas too. Leroy was able to get some basic help from his homemaking aide on how to use his phone, including how to charge it, check voicemails, and pay his phone bill.

Leroy continued to open up to Jackie about needing more help, although he wasn't always clear on what that help was. Jackie talked with him about adding some personal care to his services. He had been resistant in the past but was now open to it after seeing some other ways that Home Care could help him. Jackie conducted a case conference with one of the nurses in our Home Care Nursing department, Andi Baker. Andi then conducted a visit with Leroy, showing care and taking a person-centered approach, and she was able to determine the level of personal care that Leroy would need. It took some time to find a vendor with availability, but Leroy was able to get a second aide to help him with some personal care help.

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Leroy continued to tell Jackie that he needed more help. He would share that his electric scooter was broken, but when Jackie tried to talk with him about ordering one, he would decline. Jackie continued to listen to him, and he continued to open up to her. He told her that his scooter's battery had an issue and sometimes he would be stranded in the community in the scooter.

He would become very fearful that he wouldn't make it back home. Not having the scooter made it harder for him to get out, his primary goal. He loved running errands in his scooter, like going to the bank and the convenience store.

Eventually, Leroy confessed to Jackie that he felt ashamed to accept anything more, as she had already given him so much. He felt like he didn't deserve something that he both needed and wanted for his quality of life. Jackie continued to talk with him, and eventually he agreed, and she was able to order him the scooter, also from Mass Surgical Supply. Leroy was so happy that he started calling Jackie weekly to thank her for helping him get the scooter. He shared with Jackie "If I didn't have LifePath, who would I have? LifePath has helped me so much. I wouldn't be here without LifePath."

All of these actions for Leroy were made possible by the collaboration between Jackie and Leroy's home care aide vendors, Mass Surgical Supply, TRIAD, and LifePath staff members Beth and Andi. Now Leroy feels empowered in other areas of his life. Jackie recently got a call from Leroy's primary care practice reporting that he is more on board with their recommendations than he's ever been before, and he is advocating for himself and focused on solutions, not just problems.

Leroy has learned that good things can happen for him when he asks, and it often takes people working together from different disciplines to make that happen. Jackie shared "LifePath really shines when we can collaborate," and this story is a wonderful example of the positive change LifePath can help facilitate.