



Crestwood Recovery Resilience Solutions

## Welcoming

By Dr. Lori Ashcraft

In this podcast on welcoming, I give you lots of ideas about how to welcome (not intake) people into your programs. It is so important to get this right because it's the first and lasting impression the person has of both us and our program. We can set the stage for a solid working relationship, or for a struggle as you try to connect later on.

Depending on the type of program we have, and the regulations that call for various actions within specified time constraints, we may have opportunities to do a few more things to enhance the process before we sit down to go over the welcome letter.

People who come into a program probably have left-over feelings from experiences they have had in similar programs that haven't been recovery oriented. Also, they may be hungry, sad, angry, tired, and/or feeling hopeless and helpless. So right after we say, "Hello", we do a quick intuitive scan and see what state of mind and body the person might be in. We follow this by asking them some questions ---such as, "Can I get you something to drink? Could you use a snack before we proceed? Are you feeling up to doing just a little paperwork? This way you are already subtly putting them in the driver's seat by asking them to make the decisions.

We may also offer them a brief tour of the facility and introduce them to those we see along the way. This could be a good assignment for a peer support specialist since they will be able to share a little of their own story as they proceed. This is another brief event, so for now, just a superficial look around will do.

Here are some examples of the required information and a way to describe it in your welcome letter:

### **Three Important requirements to include in the welcome letter**

1. Honoring Your Confidentiality: Any information you share with us will be kept confidential. 1

The only circumstances under which we may release information concerning the service you receive are:

- Medical emergencies or other harmful situations,
- Information required by a court order, or other legal requirements we have to comply with.

2. Addressing Your Complaints: If you have any problems with our services, please let us know right away. We appreciate your feedback and will use it to help us improve our services. Feel free to approach any of us to discuss and resolve the issue. If that does not solve the problem, we will give you a copy of our complaint and grievance procedure and assist you in completing a written request for a solution. That is your right. We will also help you obtain assistance from other advocates.

*This county's Patient's Rights Advocate: phone number*

*California Office of Patient's Rights: phone number*

3. Respecting Your Rights: All people receiving services from us have certain rights that cannot be denied to them for any reason. Here is a list of rights that every single person maintains throughout their stay here:

- *The Right to Humane Care* – You have the right to dignity, privacy, and humane care. You also have the right to treatment services that promote your potential to function independently. Treatment must be provided in ways that are least restrictive to you.
- *The Right to Be Free from Abuse or Neglect* – You have the right to be free from abuse, neglect, or harm. Medication shall not be used as punishment, for the convenience of staff, as a substitute for treatment, or in quantities that interfere with the treatment program. You also have the right to be free from potential harmful situations or conditions.
- *The Right to Social Activities and Recreation* – You have the right to social interaction and participation in activities within the community or within the facility. You have the right to physical exercise and recreational opportunities.
- *The Right to Education* – You have the right to participate in appropriate programs of publicly supported education.
- *The Right to Religious Freedom and Practice* – You have the right to religious freedom and practice.
- *The Right to Be Free from Discrimination* – You have the right to receive mental health

services without discrimination.

Now let's have a conversation about auditors.

I wish I'd remembered to share this next part in the podcast, and I'm planning to include it in the podcast about planning. That is this: One of the purposes of the welcome letter is to include the required information that would otherwise take several pages of wordy description and be mostly unintelligible. The trick is, these succinct points in the welcome letter need to meet the requirements of the funding source and hence (drum roll) the auditors!!!

It's always tempting to think of the auditors as the bad guys. Let's not fall into that mindset since it could block us from finding the most productive way of working with them. Their job is to find out if we are doing what we promised we would do when we signed up to take reimbursement from their source. They will be looking for certain things that are required by regulation, like the three areas I mentioned above. Auditors may not be able to translate innovative approaches into what is specified in regulation. This calls upon us to be ready and able to explain how our welcome letter meets all of the requirements. We may want to do this even before the audit so they know how to find things that may look different than expected.

I wish you the best as you set about transforming your welcoming practices into friendly and compassionate ways of being.

Lori