

Getting to “Yes” with Complex Patients

An interview with Brenda Riordan, who joined VNS Health this past July as SVP of Home Care and Care Management Solutions. In this one-on-one discussion, Riordan focuses on the Home Care team and its challenges and successes.

The home care industry is facing its share of challenges. How is VNS Health Home Care faring?

We’re doing well. Demand for home care is very high, which is a good problem to have—we’re getting plenty of referrals. But we also need to make sure we have the capacity to meet this demand, so we’re working hard on hiring and retention. We added a substantial number of new nurses to our Home Care team in 2024. At the same time, our overall turnover rate has gone from 25 percent to 13 percent in the past year, which means we’re retaining many more team members.

What’s contributed to this improvement?

We’re very committed to supporting our team members, in the field and otherwise, and it’s having a positive effect. We established a task force dedicated to optimizing retention of Home Care team members, and we’ve made a number of positive changes as a result—such as retooling how new clinicians are onboarded, so they have more mentoring during their critical

first year. Our team members also provide ongoing input through various platforms that allow them to help shape our policies and procedures.

How is this strong hiring and retention impacting your Home Care admissions?

I'm pleased to say that our patient volume is the highest it's been since the pandemic. At the moment we're focused on raising our conversion rate, which is the percentage of referrals we accept. As part of this effort, we've begun evaluating our most challenging referrals on a case-by-case basis, seeing how we can get to "yes" as far as admitting these complex patients, and our conversion rate is trending upward as a result.

What kind of care model does VNS Health offer complex patients?

What's exciting to me is that VNS Health has all the components to deliver truly integrated care—home care, home health aide services, hospice, behavioral health, care management, and in-home medical care. There are very few organizations that bring together all of these different services. When it comes to delivering integrated care and managing chronic conditions for vulnerable patient populations, VNS Health is very well situated.

You started at VNS Health in July. What's struck you so far about VNS Health as an organization?

One thing that comes through clearly is the longevity and dedication of the team members who work here. That speaks volumes for the organization. I think the history of VNS Health and the commitment of our people is second to none.

Is that what led you to join VNS Health?

That, and VNS Health's mission. I wanted to get back to the mission-driven work of developing an integrated care model in underserved communities—which is at the core of everything we do.

You're an occupational therapist by training. How has that impacted your current role?

Occupational therapists are fundamentally problem solvers. It's a key part of our training as OTs. From a leadership perspective, that skill set is extremely useful when it comes to bringing people together and working with them to overcome barriers and challenges as a team—which sums up my job pretty well!