

ADDRESSING LONELINESS THROUGH CONNECTION: THE CARE CALLER PROGRAM

A PROACTIVE SDOH INITIATIVE AT MCMH *Christie Welter, LBSW, MCMH Clinics Navigator*

OBJECTIVES

- Identify patients experiencing loneliness and provide support through regular connection.
- Offer a structured program (Care Callers) to reduce isolation and improve patient well-being.
- Engage staff in meaningful wellness activities that also benefit patients.

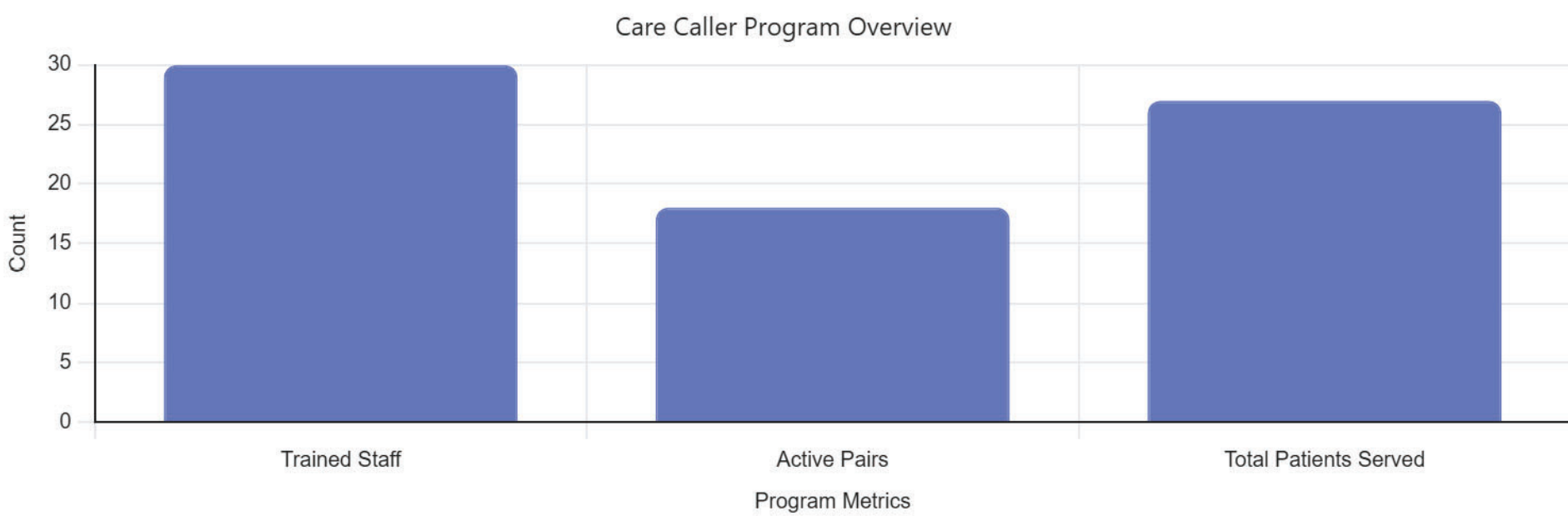


ACTION TAKEN

Loneliness was added to the SDOH screening form in March 2025. Screening question: "Do you often feel lonely, or isolated from others, and would you benefit from someone checking in with you weekly for support and conversation?"

- Staff were invited to volunteer as Care Callers:
- Calls are conducted during work hours and count toward a wellness program that rewards extra PTO.
 - Staff receive training on call purpose, reporting concerns, handling emergencies, and conversation topics.

Patients who indicate loneliness are contacted and offered participation. Participation is voluntary, with the choice to stop at any time.



ANALYSIS

Approximately 2,100 patients complete screenings monthly.

On average, 14 patients per month report experiencing loneliness.

30 staff members have been trained as Care Callers.

27 total patients have participated in the program since its launch.

Currently, there are 18 active patient-staff weekly call pairings.

The data suggests steady but selective program uptake, with capacity for growth given the number of trained staff.

BACKGROUND

- In summer 2024, during an SDOH meeting, loneliness was identified as a significant concern after insights from a conference.
- This discussion prompted a brainstorming session about how many patients may be affected and how the organization could help.
- The idea for the Care Callers program was developed from this conversation.

NEXT STEPS

- Increase patient participation by promoting the program and improving outreach to those who screen positive.
- Evaluate program outcomes (e.g., patient satisfaction, impact on loneliness levels).
- Expand staff engagement to ensure program sustainability and scalability.
- Refine screening and referral processes to capture more eligible patients.