

Increasing access to base-line program services for your clients... Merger anyone?

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Brief Description:

For increasing access and overcoming barriers perspective: Mergers seem to leave a bad taste in most people's mouth; however if an organization wants to offer more programs to their ever growing client list and have help with increased revenue, a smart merger is the best course of action.

This submission was selected as part of a national challenge issued to leaders in all communities seeking new "best practices" and "best possibilities" for the future of nutrition and aging.

LifeCare Alliance was founded in 1898 by Catherine Nelson Black to, "care for those who no one else would care for." LifeCare Alliance has maintained Catherine's vision and continues to provide health and nutrition services for the underserved by:

1. Always accepts new client in need; we have no waiting list.
2. Caring for clients, regardless of their ability to pay.
3. Designing every client treatment with a LifeCare Alliance Registered Nurse, Licensed Social Worker, and Registered Dietician. Each treatment is specifically created to meet each client's varying need.
4. Maintaining a volunteer army that continues to grow and is 7600 strong which means anytime a client has a need we have two, four or 20 hands to send them help.

LifeCare Alliance has emerged as a national leader in merger collaborations, having successfully completed now four mergers in the last eight years with Meals-on- Wheels of Madison County, Project OpenHand-Columbus, the Columbus Cancer Clinic, and IMPACT Safety. These mergers have eliminated or reduced costs and the redundancy of services in Central Ohio, resulting in more funds for programs, enhanced services and an increase in client access to basic needs. Our success with these mergers is because of the support in the community like our local elected officials, funders, board members, donors and volunteers. Our goals are to increase budgets for programming offering additional services to the 15,000 clients we serve annually. Increased

opportunities for clients translates into offering them basic level services. LifeCare Alliance pioneered the delivery of community health and nutrition services. With a staff of approximately 201 dedicated individuals and 7,600 volunteers, LifeCare Alliance continues to assist residents in Franklin and Madison Counties through its signature programs: Meals-on-Wheels, Senior Dining Centers, Wellness Services, Help-at-Home, Visiting Nurse Association, Columbus Cancer Clinic, Project OpenHand- Columbus, Groceries-to-Go, and IMPACT Safety.

This is one-stop shopping for all our clients all under one roof and has reduced barriers to healthcare and food, a most basic need. Offering a variety of services allows for an increase in revenue from corporate, foundation and individual donors. The goal of a public for profit company, is to create value/revenue for the shareholders. Being part of a not-for-profit, our shareholders are our clients and our goal is to create value for our clients. Accepting a merger or collaboration with another organization creates that value needed for your clients. We want to provide tools for our clients to have success by remaining in their own home where they want to be.

The Board of Directors voted unanimously on mergers with the Madison County Meal Program (2003), Project OpenHand- Columbus (2004), the Columbus Cancer Clinic (2005), and IMPACT Safety (2011). The mergers with LifeCare Alliance created a stronger, more effective and efficient organization to serve those in need in Central Ohio. The mergers also provided better service to our clients, seamless service delivery; reduce overhead costs and better utilization of our limited resources.

Below are 2011 statistics from our clients who receive these additional services which have reduced barriers to healthcare while increasing access to nourishment.

Madison County Meals-on-Wheels, a program in rural central Ohio was managed by the Madison County Hospital until funding and expenses became too much to support.

Vulnerable Central Ohioans in this area, have a heightened need for good nutrition, but also have limited means and abilities to secure such nutrition. The individuals are at high risk for experiencing not only hunger, but chronic illness as well. During the past few years, especially in the rural areas of Ohio, there has been consistent growth in the number of people requesting LifeCare Alliance services. Daily service logs for this population confirm this growing need. The growth in the homebound chronically-ill population with unmet needs stems from medical advances that prolong life, family structures that seldom include care- givers, general conditions of poverty, lack of access to health care, and the de-institutionalization trend.

LifeCare Alliance's Meals-on-Wheels Program is committed to serving older adults, chronically ill, disabled, and homebound individuals. Because LifeCare Alliance accepts all clients in need, regardless of their ability to pay, additional funding is critical. Simply put, LifeCare Alliance provides the highest quality, least costly means to address major health issues and concerns in Madison County and Central Ohio. Funding for meals for the target population continues to be scarce, significantly limited, and declining. LifeCare Alliance expects our target population base to continue to grow as the aging population increases, therefore increasing demand. This program served 49,681 meals to 299 homebound clients. Madison County clients represent 8% of clients receiving MOW overall (Franklin County has 4035 clients receiving MOW.) Madison County Meals-on-Wheels merged into LifeCare Alliance in 2003.

Project OpenHand-Columbus provides home-delivered nutritionally enriched meals, pantry items, nutritional supplements, nutritional assessments, counseling, and a congregate meal program to men, women, and children living with HIV/AIDS in Central Ohio. In 2011, Project OpenHand Columbus provided over 22,448 home-delivered meals and served over 300 congregate meals as well as provided over 10,584 bags of groceries to 637 clients. Nearly 17% of the Project OpenHand-Columbus clients are aged 55 or over, 91% have incomes less than \$20,000 annually, 27% are female, and 59% are minority. Project OpenHand began in San Francisco, and was founded in Columbus in 1994. This agency merged into LifeCare Alliance in 2004.

Columbus Cancer Clinic, a Medicare certified service, provides education about cancer prevention and early detection, head-to-toe cancer screenings and examinations and mammograms, regardless of the ability to pay. In 2011, the program served 3,469 clients providing 1,593 mammograms, 1,163 head-to-toe cancer screenings, and 713 clients with home care support services.

In addition, the program provides low-income, under insured or uninsured individuals living with active cancer with medical supplies, medical equipment, medication assistance, transportation to and from cancer related medical appointments, pantry items, nutritional supplements and emergency financial assistance to those home care support patients who are about to lose daily necessities such as housing and/or utilities. The program will provide skilled nursing care, home health aide, social work, therapy, and/or dietitian if needed to maintain the patient in the home setting. All home care support services are free of charge. In 2011, the Home Care Support service served 713 Central Ohioans living with active cancer. Wigs and breast prostheses may be obtained free of charge. Twenty-two percent (22%) of all Columbus Cancer Clinic clients are over the age of 65, 60% have incomes less than \$20,000 annually, 86% are

female, and 42% are minority. The Columbus Cancer Clinic began in 1921 and is the oldest free cancer clinic in the United States. The Columbus Cancer Clinic merged into LifeCare Alliance in 2005.

IMPACT Safety has been serving the community for 19 years, by developing and teaching interpersonal safety skills to a wide range of populations including women, youth, those with disabilities, the elderly, and professionals in the workplace. IMPACT Safety's expertise is recognized internationally as well as locally.

Statistics regarding mergers from non-profits and corporations are very similar.

Over 10 years stats show that 1.5% of merger activity comes from non-profits and 1.7% of merger activity comes from corporations or big business. These types of percentages are interesting to funders because it sets a trend that indicates nonprofits aren't so different from corporations & businesses.

Usually people think 'should we do a merger or shouldn't we?' At LifeCare Alliance we want people to think of mergers in this way, 'how do we best fulfill our mission and are we successful in serving our clients?' The benefits of merging need to include quality in existing services, improving services, and increased funding. We must move forward, always forward, to achieve our goals. Each step is important. Each victory will change the life of one of our clients.

Today's not-for-profit organizations should look at the potential of merging with another organization. Non-profits are less likely to pursue a merger than a publicly held company that is stockholder driven. A business school study published in an issue of *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, predicts one-third of all not-for-profits will merge or go out of business within the next 10 years. That forecast that is worth considering.