

ATLAS: Advancing Teamwork for Library Accessible Services

A Communication Training Program for Library Volunteers

OBJECTIVES

- To improve the quality of services provided to Baycrest clients, residents and visitors, thereby enhancing the customer's experience
- To offer library volunteers the opportunity to improve their customer service skills and learn to effectively work together while assisting clients

BACKGROUND

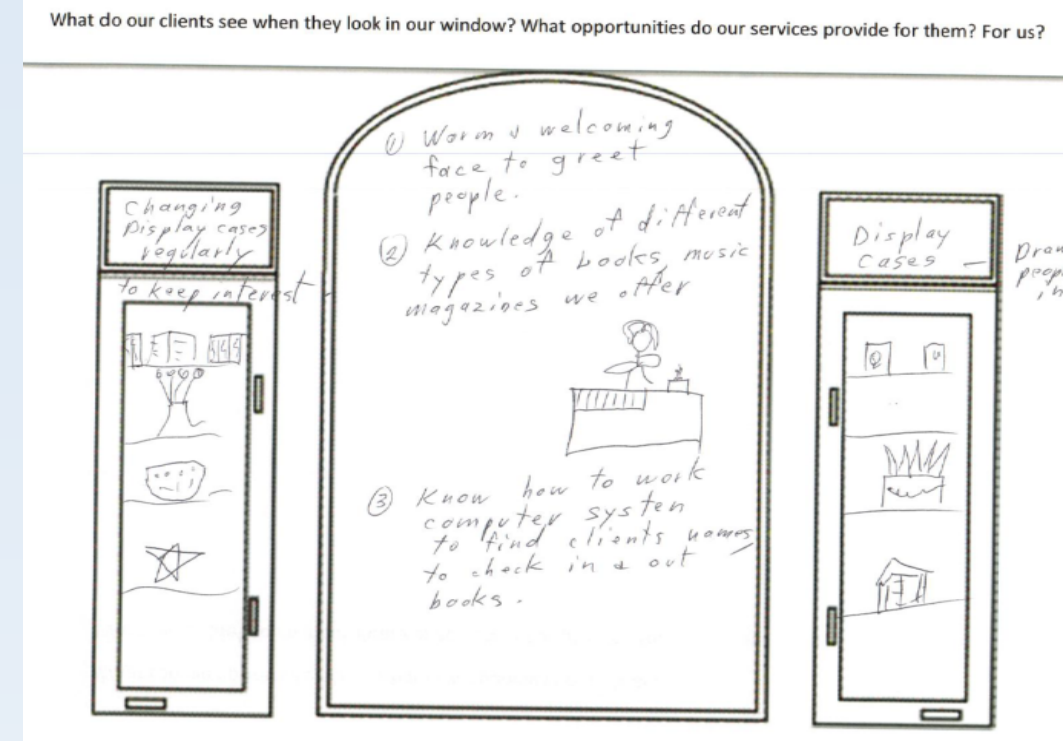
Baycrest Wellness Library volunteers are primarily seniors and serve predominantly geriatric clients. While these volunteers are trained and dedicated, the quality of service provided was inconsistent. Literature on training for this unique group is scarce, but highlights the value of senior volunteers. Also, Baycrest's demographic includes many library users who have some cognitive impairment. The volunteers would benefit from learning more about communicating with these clients. In response, an innovative training program, ATLAS (Advancing Teamwork for Library Accessible Services), was developed in collaboration between Library Services and the Training and Simulation Division.

PARTICIPANTS

- Library Services** – Manager of Library Services
- Training and Simulation Division** – 2 Interprofessional Educators, 1 Simulationist
- Library Volunteers** – 11 volunteers
- Simulation Participants (SPs)** – 7 seniors trained to play the roles of library clients

Engaging Volunteers Using Appreciative Enquiry

“Collaboration... is about the ideas that never existed until after everyone entered the room” - Unknown



DESCRIPTION

Based on objectives determined by the volunteer focus group, three experiential 90 minute workshops were created and delivered jointly by the Library Manager, Interprofessional Educators and Simulationist.

Workshop 1 – Orientation

- Describe the organizational vision and how it relates to the library
- Define collaboration
- Understand the importance of roles and responsibilities of library volunteer team members

Workshop Learning Objectives Workshop 2 – Teamwork

- Explore and identify the various roles and skills of team members in building effective teams
- Apply the 5 W's and 2 Best Practice Guidelines to Information Sharing

Workshop 3 – Communicating with Clients

- Understand common challenges in communicating with persons experiencing cognitive changes
- List strategies for effective client-centered communication
- Reflect on applications of communication to your job description as a volunteer

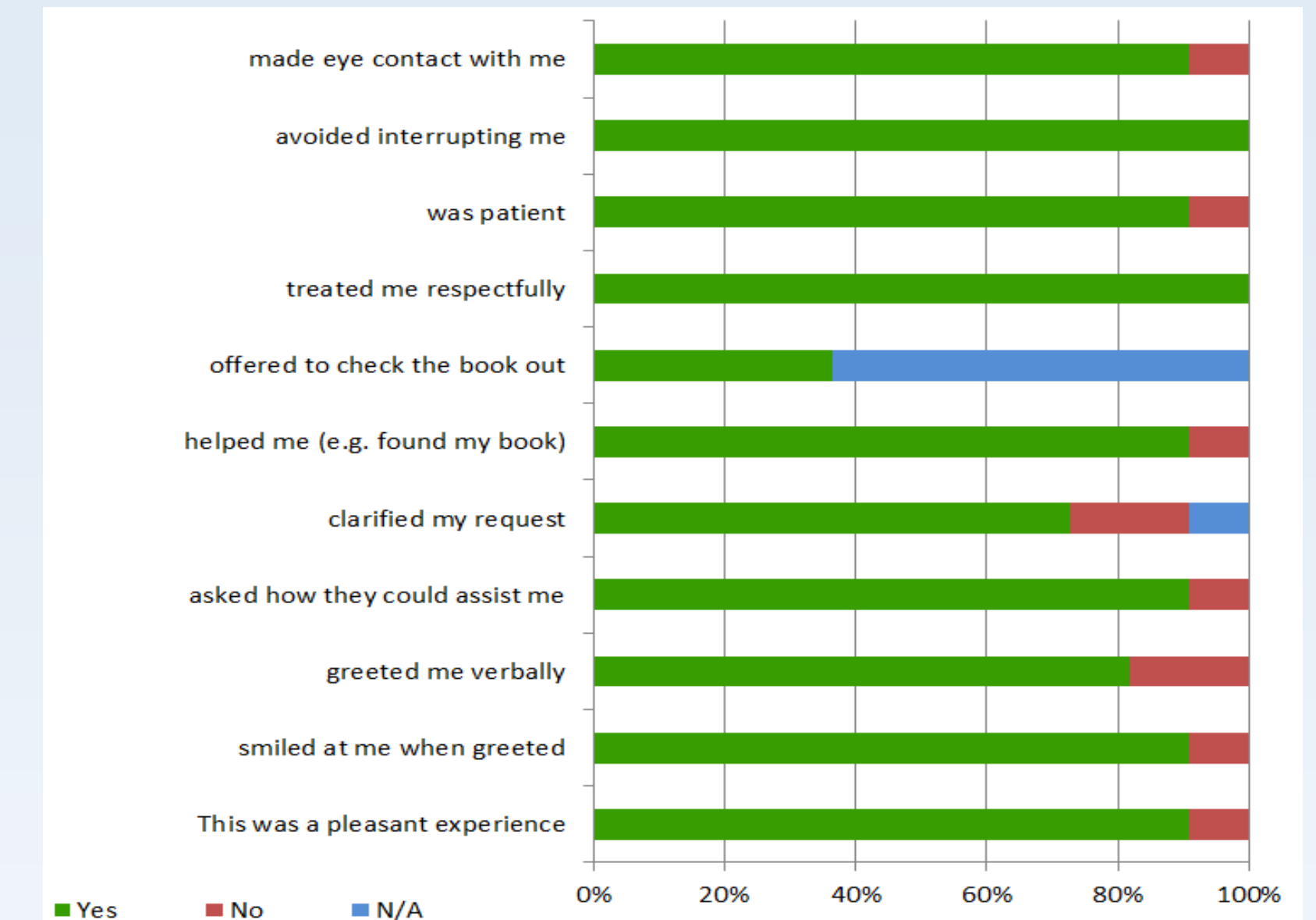
EVALUATION

To evaluate the effect of the program on customer service, a “mystery visitor” (similar to secret shopper) in-situ simulation approach was used 6 months post-training. Volunteer engagement was maintained by consulting them on evaluation criteria, which was used to create the mystery visitor feedback form. The mystery visitors were Simulation Participants (SPs) who played the roles of library clients. The visits were conducted as semi-scripted client-volunteer interactions, on which the SPs provided written feedback. For transparency, volunteers were notified of the timeframe when mystery visits would take place, however no other details were provided.

OUTCOMES

Mystery Visitor Findings

The Library Volunteer...



Highlights: 100% of SPs felt respected, 90% of SPs thought it was a pleasant experience

QUALITATIVE FEEDBACK

“They took the time to see what else was available.”
 “A most pleasant encounter. Warm, welcoming and friendly.”
 “She went out of her way to look for the book including going through a rack of donated books that had not yet been catalogued.”
 “She left her work and gave me her full attention.”

DISCUSSION

ATLAS is a communication training program for library volunteers that uses a collaborative, appreciative inquiry approach to maximize engagement. The program gave the volunteers an opportunity for continuing education, and they enjoyed the workshops. Also, using SPs was successful for assessing application of knowledge. In the future, the program would benefit from conducting mystery visitor evaluations pre-training. These workshops could be adapted to meet the needs of other organizations. With this training, volunteers are better equipped to offer customer-focused service tailored to the needs of clients.

ATLAS Program Development Timeline

