

## Case Study

### Client Profile

Regional Bureau for Behavioral Health and Health Facilities

## Selecting Medical Leadership for a Behavioral Health Bureau

### Business Issue

The Commissioner of the Bureau for Behavioral Health and Health Facilities of a state in the northeastern region of the United States wanted expert advice on how to secure medical leadership for the bureau's work in running mental health and substance-abuse treatment facilities. The bureau is also responsible for other programs to prevent and contain mental health and substance-abuse problems and to integrate prevention into the greater healthcare system. Even though he has access to physicians in his treatment facilities, particularly psychiatrists, the Commissioner felt that he needed a broader view of prevention practice than these clinicians can offer. The Commissioner wanted advice on who to hire and what qualifications and experience to require.

### The Solution

Partnership Continuum, Inc.'s Neal Holtan, M.D., M.P.H, and Director of the firm's Preventive Medicine and Public Health Consulting Division, provided consultation to the Commissioner about physician leadership in large governmental health-oriented agencies. He interviewed the Commissioner to determine what expertise and experience he thought were needed from a physician leader.

Holtan agreed with the Commissioner's resolve to obtain medical input that focused less on the care of individual patients and more on improving the health of the state's population. He worked with the Commissioner to define the role of a physician as an internal consultant and an external change agent.

Holtan advised the Commissioner to focus on the bureau's mission of improving population health rather than on the internal details of the bureau's organization. He reinforced the

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- Bureau Commissioner

Commissioner's commitment to a broad mission of improving population health and reinforced the Commissioner's intention to integrate mental health services, substance abuse treatment/prevention, and the non-governmental primary care health provider system in the state. Holtan advised identifying desirable aspects of the physician's training and experience to promote that mission.

To the Commissioner's surprise, Holtan told him that the kind of physician the bureau should hire hinged on the doctor's medical specialty, rather than the doctor's clinical experience. The breakthrough idea was that the Commissioner did not need a clinician in the physician leadership position. Holtan suggested that physicians trained in preventive medicine with skills in epidemiology and public health are more likely to have the background for creating organizational change and aligning the mission among the various components of the bureau.

Holtan therefore advised that the Commissioner hire a physician with training and credentials in the specialty of preventive medicine rather than one with training in a clinical specialty such as psychiatry, internal medicine, or pediatrics. Preventive medicine physicians have a master's degree in public health as a required component of their training; that knowledge gives them an orientation to work with populations, organizations, and communities.

In addition to the specialty credential, Holtan advised the Commissioner that the physician leader needs effective skills in forming partnerships, not only within the bureau but also externally with professional organizations, advocacy groups, community leaders, and many other segments of society. Partnering skills exemplified by Partnership Continuum's Six Partnering Attributes are absolutely necessary for physician leaders to provide leadership inside a large governmental agency and create relationships externally so that real change occurs.

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In the twenty-first century, businesses that develop, sustain and profit from partnerships faster and better will attain organizational success. At the core of any successful business are people. After all, businesses don't partner; people do. Developing the partnering intelligence of your people is what we do.

Partnership Continuum, Inc. mobilizes your relationships with employees, customers, suppliers, and even competitors in surprising and rewarding ways. Our unique and innovative programs and products lead to higher productivity and stronger relationships enhancing your partnering capability through building trust, positive exchanges, respectful interactions, beneficial outcomes, future potential, and leadership excellence.

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