

## Faces Behind-the-Scenes Profile...

### Elma Godoy-Williams:

#### *Bridging Gaps Between Sales and Operations to Improve Customer Relations*

**A**s customers, none of us like to be put on hold, bounced around, or told to call back. We expect that a company selling a product or service will make good on its promise.

This wisdom holds true in the world of alternate-site infusion sales as well. When your sales team assures a referral source that your organization can handle a certain patient or therapy, or meet a certain timeline, it is important that you deliver on your promise. In the execution, it can be helpful to have a bridge between sales and operations: a person who can foresee challenges, troubleshoot on the fly, serve as a trusted customer contact, and improve the process at every opportunity.

For Home Solutions, a Northeast/Mid-Atlantic regional home infusion provider, that bridge is Elma Godoy-Williams, Director of Patient and Client Services. “Home Solutions’ goal is to ‘treat patients like family.’ We focus on giving them our best, so when salespeople make promises, someone has to fulfill



*Elma Godoy-Williams, Director of Patient and Client Services for Home Solutions*

them throughout the entire organization,” says Godoy-Williams. “I manage the Intake departments across all of Home Solutions’ branches, which is our company’s internal team that coordinates the patient’s needs after sales has pinpointed a referral. My job is to make sure everything goes smoothly and if there is a hiccup, I troubleshoot efficiently.”

Hiccups can be frustrating for any patient coming onto service, as well as for the referral source that is managing the patient’s needs. As a result, every referral source that recommends Home Solutions has access to Godoy-Williams. She is available to solve problems, coach colleagues and refine internal procedures to stream-

line the process and is the “go to” person within the organization who provides updates, answers questions, and establishes confidence between external and internal employees so promises can be delivered upon.

### Proactively Meeting Specific Needs

“It’s very common to have referral sources with customized needs,” explains Joe Malatesta, Executive Vice President of Sales and Marketing, “and thankfully, the corporate model we’ve crafted provides us the flexibility so we can tailor our internal protocols to meet them.” For example, Home Solutions works with a number of large teaching hospitals in the region that expect their intake department to provide a quick turnaround time. Depending upon the day, the time, and the location of the patient, this can be a tall order for any home infusion

**Editor’s Note:** Could your business thrive without the knowledge, skills and experience demonstrated by the personnel in the warehouse, the technicians, intake staff, dieticians, drivers and other critical individuals who display the passion and caring for the patient through the work they do everyday? NHIA plans to utilize this periodic INFUSION department to better recognize and examine these indispensable faces behind-the-scenes!

provider—especially since the intake process can be so complex. Regardless of the hurdles that may arise, Godoy-Williams is there to make sure they are cleared and that the referral source gets an intake confirmation or call back within 30 minutes.

Additionally, Godoy-Williams reports that the insurance verification is the most challenging on the operations side, but Home Solutions has bridged that gap between the patient and intake. “We recently put a new program into place so that the patient’s financial responsibility is worked out while they are still in the hospital,” says Godoy-Williams. “Financial stress is one less thing we want on the mind of a recovering patient.”

In another example, Godoy-Williams is the primary contact for certain home health agency customers that have specific needs regarding the way information is communicated to them, such as lab results. She works behind the scenes, transcending the organization’s standard policies and procedures to ensure that information moves according to their needs.

“With repeat customers and key accounts, referral and patient needs can go above and beyond what the local intake staff has the time to do,” explains Malatesta. “Having Elma involved is a way of nurturing the relationship.”

“Referral sources, who are serviced by multiple branches, need to be assured that there is consistency throughout the organization,” adds Malatesta. “Elma makes sure that all our locations service their referrals the same way. She travels to all the branches to ensure that there’s continuity of services and that each location is seamlessly meeting the expectations of the customer.”

She works to refine internal systems for special patient and therapy

types as well. “Pediatric patients require a lot of coordination, and compassion,” observes Godoy-Williams. “The family factors heavily,” she says, “which requires the provider to consider several moving parts, such as teaching them the therapy, selecting a pump and administration method, logistics, and supplies.”

“Home Solutions also does a lot of therapy-specific education where we work internally with sales and internal staff, such as billing and nursing, to coordinate logistics,” says Kelly Aldridge, Regional Vice President of Sales and Marketing. “IVIG patients are a good example, as they are sometimes difficult to get admitted for service. During a recent initiative, Elma was the middleman on educating physicians about the documentation we need from them and why. On the flip side, she educated Home Solutions’ staff regarding timely intake, billing, keeping the product on the shelves, administration methods, and so on. Elma’s efforts ultimately guaranteed results across the board.”

### Leveraging a Wealth of Experience

Godoy-Williams’ effectiveness is rooted in her expertise. She’s been with Home Solutions for 12 years, and has worked in every department. “I started as a part-time biller back when we had one tiny office,” she recalls. “I’ve been a patient care representative, a pharmacy technician, intake clerk and even had to make some of my own deliveries.” A self-described “sponge,” Godoy-Williams learns something about the business at every turn. She’s also watched Home Solutions grow to a regional player with seven locations, “absorbing it all in” all the while.

“Elma has a clear understanding of how new procedures will impact each of the various departments,” observes Aldridge. “She has worked

in most of them and trained staff members in all of them.”

“From an operations perspective, she can think through the process and has unique insight into how a customer’s needs will translate to the daily workings of the organization,” continues Malatesta. “When we (the sales team) come to her with a need, she sees the challenges involved, but she also sees through that to the resolution.”

In a recent example, a potential referral source asked that one of Home Solutions’ offices coordinate patient care beyond infusion care. That meant interfacing with other agencies for respiratory therapy, physical therapy, and so on—all of which was outside the company’s traditional provider role.

“It was a stretch for us,” recalls Aldridge, “but we made the commitment to coordinate these other components of care and pilot the new role with this account.”

“The new relationship required putting new policies into place,” explains Godoy-Williams. “Intake had to understand what we were doing and why, and so did other departments. Initially, there was some push back—there always is with new things—but it was successful, so the fear of change has gone away,” she says. “It’s given us the drive to do more and continue to be flexible.”

“The program has been successful, and made the customer very happy,” observes Malatesta. “Even Elma was skeptical at first. She raised some very valuable questions as we examined our protocols, but she was always looking for ways to make it happen. She’s a ‘doer’—she generally wants to get involved and find a way to help.”

### Secret Sales Weapon

Having someone to smooth out the rough spots and put a positive face

on everything can be a real asset. From a sales perspective, Godoy-Williams brings value because she helps the organization meet the wants and needs of referral sources. “Part of our job in sales is to educate the referral source about what we can do,” explains Malatesta. “Having Elma on board allows us to back that up.”

“She’s like having a ‘secret weapon,’” adds Aldridge. “Our mature core accounts know her by name and will ask us to bring her on sales calls. Those are always the easiest calls I make.”

Godoy-Williams assists with new business, as well, by assuring potential referral sources that the organization can accommodate

them—and explaining in detail how it will be accomplished. Back at the office, her suggestions for putting new policies in place are well received. “Elma is a working manager, so she sees what the rest of the staff sees,” explains Malatesta. “She understands their concerns and works with them—she doesn’t just heap demands on them with no way of delivering.”

As the organization continues to grow, not every referral source will be able to have the personal connection with Godoy-Williams that they are used to. “We’re slowly adding new people to support Elma’s position so she isn’t spread too thin. This way we can continue to live up to servicing our referral

base at the level that Elma has established.” adds Malatesta.

Still, Godoy-Williams remains one of the few trusted all-purpose resources within Home Solutions’ organization. She’s one of three or four people who receive and answer e-mail queries from the “info@” address on the company’s website. “Those questions run the gamut,” says Aldridge, “and she is one of the few people who can answer them all.”

“I love my job,” exclaims Godoy-Williams. “It’s been challenging, but very rewarding and I learn something new everyday.” And then, clearly, she applies that knowledge to advance her organization’s ability to succeed. ▀



## Who’s working “behind-the-scenes” to make your organization great?

Alternate-site infusion providers are on a continuous journey towards achieving excellence. A path of quality care, paved with many examples of leadership and commitment—some highly visible, some not as readily apparent (but, nonetheless, deeply rooted and vitally important). Beyond the unmistakable center-stage roles played by home infusion pharmacists and nurses within our field, perhaps the most unexpected treasures for us all to discover and explore can be found in the stories of the skilled employees who work behind the scenes to make a home infusion company successful—the devoted “faces behind-the-scenes.”

Share your stories and help us celebrate—and learn from—the unsung heroes of the alternate-site infusion community.

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