

Institute for the Mission

“Continuity and transfer of Care”

Christella Villasenor

Transfer of care is a familiar concept in our lives. Parents of small children often develop an elaborate network of care for children depending on their family situation. It may include relatives, friends, babysitters, daycare, etc. in order to ensure children are supervised and safe. In the field of nursing, the transfer of care is intricate and essential, as a misstep can compromise the care, treatment, and safety of a patient. It is a concept we put much thought into in our own lives. We check weather, traffic patterns, schedules, and arrange carpools in order to keep ourselves and our loved ones safe as they navigate the world.

For those we serve in Good Shepherd, care has often been withheld or compromised. Sometimes it is outward neglect or abuse, sometimes difficult circumstances such as politics, war, hunger, poverty, or disability. When we meet individuals in such circumstances, it is common for Good Shepherd people to have a desire to care. After all, we believe as St. Mary Euphrasia passed down to us that, “One person is of more value than a world.” Each individual we encounter has worth and is deserving of our care.

Relationships are essential to our work. We know that relationships allow for trust to form, thus enabling those in our care to receive the love and services we offer. SME reminds us to, “be serious but full of kindness, especially to new arrivals, because no matter the color of their tears, they are always bitter, and if you are not good and compassionate to them they could succumb to despair.”

How often do we work with someone who is not open to receive us at first?

They may lash out in anger, choosing to put up a wall so they can't be hurt again. As we chip away at that wall with smiles, kind words, high fives, and fair treatment, we see these individuals open up as a relationship is formed.

One of the most difficult things we can manage once that bond is formed is transfer of care. How do we reconcile transfer of care when we finally broke through the wall? How can we be sure the individual we are caring for will continue to be okay if we are not there to make sure it happens? We might want to protect those we work with, not wanting to see them be hurt again. How lucky are we, as Good Shepherd people? We are surrounded by mission-driven people who want to do good and carry out this work as well. It is up to us to maintain our community within our organizations so those we serve can move within the organization and receive care from each person he or she encounters.

Continuity and transfer of care is essential within our organizations. When someone has faced a lack of care in his or her life, it is important for that person to see that they can be loved. It is even more important for them to see that they can be loved again and again. As Good Shepherd people, we must build trust in each other, that as an individual goes through our programs, he or she will be treated with dignity, respect, and love **by every person, in every role.** Whether you are a counselor, teacher, maintenance worker, cook, accountant, or gardener, you have the chance to uphold the value of those you come in contact with. Remember, there are no small roles when it comes to the saving of souls.

SME tells us to, “Be aware that what would change one person, could do just the opposite to another. It takes great tact and discernment to say things at the right time and in the right way.” Each person's gifts will become visible in different ways. It is not up to us to be THE saving grace in the lives of those we serve. It is up to us to use our gifts in the moment given,

and have confidence that the next Good Shepherd person will do the same. Their gifts may appear nothing like our own, but have value just the same.

The continuity of love will help those we serve to know they are worthy of love always and in every relationship.

We also have to admit that working with those who are at-risk can be draining and we can be easily fatigued, often holding the weight of those we serve along with the burdens we hold ourselves. Transfer of care allows us to maintain and nourish our zeal. Without this chance, we may not be able to uphold the mission. Allowing for a shared experience will also help us to prepare for the next moment we are needed.

Think back to St. Mary Euphrasia herself, sending Sisters out the green door to form new houses. Her belief was that every person who came into contact with those Sisters came into contact with the Good Shepherd mission. If she could believe that the mission crossed oceans, surely we can believe that the mission can cross a hallway. Sometimes, getting to know those we work with on a deeper level can allow us more comfort as we entrust those in our care to move past our door.

Sometimes, we will be on the receiving end of the transfer. It can also be difficult to engage someone who has only just begun to let down his or her wall with someone else. In those times, remember what St. Mary Euphrasia practiced. She said, "Do as I did. I had no great talents. I have done nothing great. I only loved, but I loved with all the strength of my soul. Just love!"

Finally, think of the benefits waiting for someone who has experienced love and acceptance from multiple people within our organizations. We take in people who may feel they are not deserving of love or kindness, but with collaboration and a shared mission, the many relationships formed send that person out into the world expecting people to treat them with the same compassion and care.

Questions for reflection:

1. Can you think of a breakthrough you made with someone within your care? What allowed for this breakthrough to happen?
2. Who is a person within your organization who you are comfortable transferring care to? What qualities does that person have that allow you to feel this way?
3. Is there a person or department you would like to get to know better so you understand how they bring the mission to your organization?
4. Is your organization or someone within your organization in need of a mission boost? How can you help deepen the mission?