



BSO Early Adopter LHINs Use Kaizen Events to Spark Local Improvements

What is a Kaizen Event?

The word ‘kaizen’ translates as transformation; kai=change + zen=for the better. A kaizen event is a structured team exercise facilitated by a process flow expert which focuses on creating more value and less waste in a given activity or process. Kaizen’s focus on getting to better, not perfect is liberating for participants as it gives “permission” for participants to try things that are “good enough”.

A kaizen event involves knowledge creation, and allows a team to move from concept to action. If, for example, the process to be developed involved an assessment, then the event would include everything from deciding factors that trigger the assessment, to developing the assessment tool, to standardizing the follow up. Participants in a kaizen event are the people who do the work since they are the ones who understand the flow and the context for the change better than anyone else. This also serves to truly engage staff, physicians and caregivers in co-creating the desired future state – far more powerful than any after-the-fact efforts to secure “buy in”.

Kaizen events are typically 1-5 days in duration depending on the complexity of the process, availability of people to engage in this type of concentrated work. The scope of the event is adjusted based on these factors. For example, a one day event would concentrate on developing one specific segment, whereas a 5 day event which would not only develop and test tools and processes, but also create training packages for new staff etc.

The event is aimed at making rapid improvements and documenting standard work. During the event, participants document the process to deliver care and develop the tools needed. They test them, study and make recommendations to improve. Then they make those changes and repeat the cycle as many times as time allows (in December, we were able to get through three complete cycles in two days – one to develop Mobile/Response Teams, one to “table top” test in a simulation and a third one to test in the LTCH). During a kaizen event, simulations are used to test the tools. Typically we would “table top” test first, using various members of the team to role play. During this activity, we revise on the spot to improve the flow and further decrease redundancy. Following this, we try to simulate in the environment. If for example, the process occurs in long term care, we test on site in a long term care home. This activity is often met with skepticism initially, but fully embraced once there has been an opportunity to try. There are nuances that simply can’t be replicated in a boardroom.

The kaizen event ends with clear plans for next steps (what, by when, who will lead).



How have the four early adopter LHINs used Kaizen events?

On December 13 & 14, 2011, four concurrent kaizen events were held in CE, SE, NSM and HNHB LHIN areas. Each group's event focused on the mobile team's response and reaction within a LTCH during a crisis or urgent response situation. In preparation for the event, the design and expected deliverables were scoped by the early adopter LHINs and Health Quality Ontario to create a kaizen realistic for a two-day event.

Day 1: On the first day of the event, each group developed the tools and processes required for the response within their community including:

- The components of the team that needed to be developed
- Expectations for response (time)
- Functions of the team
- Tools (e.g., assessments, triage tools, visual management systems, communication tools) the team would use during the process
- Opportunities to model behaviour within the LTCH
- Local resources that can be leveraged and
- Key process measures.

The four groups connected by phone to share learning and tools with one another at designated times throughout the day. Each group ended the day by assembling a package to test the next morning.

Day 2: The second day involved testing the tools and processes they developed during day one. Each group completed a table top test – a simulation or role play of the process to identify what worked and what needed to be revised. Revisions were made and the process and tools were tested again in the afternoon. Some of the LHINs were able to conduct a simulated test on the floor of a LTCH, others tested the revised tools and processes through a second table top test.

The kaizen event ended with individual LHIN groups determining their next steps and the LHINs coming together to identify next steps across their four sites.

Where to next?

The four concurrent kaizen events in December have sparked further improvement efforts in each of the early adopter LHINs. Groups have moved to testing the processes and tools live within LTCH and continue to learn with each test. Copies of the materials from the December kaizen event can be accessed through the BSO Collaborative Space or from the BSO Improvement Facilitator.

The kaizen methodology has successfully sparked improvements in other areas of the early adopter LHIN BSO action plans with an event focused on the use of CCAC Waypoint and another on the development of an Integrated Community Lead.

