

Greenbelt Profile: Kathleen Stewart

A Value Institute Learning Center Publication



Kathleen Stewart, a program coordinator for Quality Assurance and Safety at Dartmouth-Hitchcock, has been working on her first greenbelt project since attending class in January 2017. She is currently wrapping up the project designed to optimize influenza vaccination clinics at the D-H Lebanon location.

After obtaining a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering, Kathleen

started her career as a research coordinator in Gastroenterology at MGH before coming to D-H to work in her current role. She has now been working here for almost two years and has had the opportunity to work with several different departments on a number of projects, with the bulk of her time spent working on infection control.

Kathleen was introduced to the Value Institute Learning Center programs very early, as her role is located within the Value Institute, and many of her colleagues spoke highly of the Yellowbelt and Greenbelt programs. She completed the online Yellowbelt and participated as a team member on a greenbelt project led by Nisalda Carreiro to reduce blood culture contaminants on inpatient units. Given her background in engineering and a tendency to take an organized and logical approach to work, she felt that Greenbelt class would be the next natural step to learn a framework for leading larger scale improvement projects.

Kathleen enjoyed that the Greenbelt class provides a mix of lecture and hands-on learning. "So often adult learning involves speakers reading off of slides for hours on end, but the activities help break the lectures up and reinforce the learning," says Kathleen. "Additionally, my classmates became friends and good resources as a result of the structure of the class and report outs." Kathleen also highlights one of the primary takeaway messages from the class about having the right mindset, "having standardized processes in the long run improves the quality of care for our patients and employee satisfaction, increases resiliency in the organization, and reduces the need for 'heroes' where processes rely on one knowledgeable and experienced individual".

For the last several months, Kathleen has been busy taking the concepts and tools that she learned in class and applying them to her influenza vaccination project. "Last fall, I coordinated these clinics and quickly realized that standardized processes were needed and an overall better plan for managing

them would be required to sustain these going forward. As a result of many hand-offs between owners, it had become more and more challenging to manage." Kathleen is now in the Control phase, and getting ready to hand the project off to operational owners, with a number of results to be proud of. "The major results that have come out of this are a better overall understanding of the clinics and the resources involved with providing more than 13,500 vaccines to patients, visitors, and employees. Because of this, we can better match staffing to anticipated demands and have reduced some of the hours of the clinics based on the demand. Checklists have been created to assist future process owners as well as templates for

"My classmates became friends and good resources as a result of the structure of the class and report outs." - Kathleen Stewart

various activities throughout the clinics. Also, we mapped out a floor plan to reduce waste and create a better flow for the large weekend clinics. Lastly, some cost-saving measures are also being explored."

Kathleen credits her project success to being able to work on a process that she was already familiar with, allowing for her to grow her skillset as a project manager and as a leader of process improvement work. While she struggled with identifying a process owner and a clear strategy for the clinics, she was able to work through that with the support of her coach and her team. "Kathleen's tenacity and engagement in solving this problem were important factors in achieving project goals. She scheduled multiple meetings and followed up with many stakeholders to come to decisions on ownership and strategy. Her commitment to training - walking the new process owners through the clinics this year, and handing off written standard work, including job aids, are key factors for success. She really wants the new owners to be successful," says her coach, Vicky Adams, Performance Improvement Consultant.

In thinking about what's next, Kathleen says that she is already using many of the DMAIC tools when working on other projects or doing analyses for her day-to-day work. She is looking forward to this flu vaccination season when she can officially complete the hand-off to the new process owners, and then perhaps work to identify another Greenbelt project opportunity. "There is always more work to be done with infection control!" Kathleen exclaims.