

...home health line's

# PRIVATE DUTY INSIDER

THE ULTIMATE MARKET INTELLIGENCE FOR NON-MEDICARE HOME CARE PROVIDERS

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- ◆ 2005 Private Duty Home Care Survey results. .... 1
- ◆ Charts: Private duty average annual revenue, '02-'04..... 3
- ◆ Private duty average net profit margin, '03-'04..... 3
- ◆ Average hours, number of clients served, '02-'04:..... 4
- ◆ **Outcome Concept Systems develops new PD benchmarks; Visiting Angels signs up ..... 4**
- ◆ Winning, maintaining referrals from trust officers and elder law attorneys.....6
- ◆ Private duty VIPs make predictions for 2005..... 9
- ◆ *Tool of the Month:* Job description for Home Care Liaison.....EXTRA
- ◆ Private duty market notes ..... 12

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## Visiting Angels first to sign up for new private duty benchmark service

Don't be surprised to see promotions early next summer from local Visiting Angels franchisees that extol their record of consistently providing clients with the same caregiver.

That's just one of the measures now being collected by Seattle-based benchmark vendor Outcome Concept Systems as part of its new benchmark offering for private duty home care providers. Some of the 240 offices carrying the banner of Visiting Angels are among those pioneering the new service for OCS, confirms Lawrence Meigs, CEO of the Havertown, Pa.-based franchise company and owner of his own 100 caregiver, 70-client Visiting Angels franchise.

Within six months, Meigs hopes his participating franchisees will start using the information collected to improve their performance and market their services. Salient numbers likely will make their way to brochures delivered to case managers, discharge planners and other popular referral sources, he predicts.

OCS, which has been providing Medicare home health-related benchmarks since 1992 and now works with some 900 home health providers, representing 1,500 locations, is offering two new private duty benchmark services:

- 1) **OCS-Image** (\$450) – The one-time survey enables private duty agencies to compare themselves to other providers on multiple marketing and operational benchmarks.
- 2) **OCS-Prosper** (\$1,500) – Private duty agencies get four weekly reports (client profiles, executive summary, marketing and client retention) as well as a larger-scale quarterly report.

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## Visiting Angels first to sign up for new private duty benchmark service (continued)

Diane Serter, the director of Meigs' Havertown office, estimates that it takes her and a co-worker about a combined three to four hours each month to collect the additional information needed from each client using OCS's online data collection tools.

Visiting Angels is collecting data on...

✓ **The source of each called-in lead.** As a result of collecting this data, Serter says she already has determined that some newspaper ads are pulling better than others, and the franchise she manages is making plans to change how it spends its advertising dollars.

Visiting Angels also notes the prospective client's age and gender, the expected payor source, the client's needs and the type of service that the agency may be expected to deliver. [See the February edition of *PDI* for average age ranges reported by private duty providers in our recent survey.]

✓ **Whether the client may be expected to be a short-term or long-term client.** For Serter's agency, the preferred long-term client is one that the agency can expect to serve for three months or longer. Other agencies may deem a client who needs service for more than a month as a long-term client, she says.

✓ **Relationship of the caller to the care recipient.** Visiting Angels wants to know who most often is requesting their services. These callers may be the people to direct marketing to in the future.

✓ **The time it takes to deliver service.** Visiting Angels starts the clock ticking at the time the service is ordered. It waves the checkered flag after the first visit is delivered and an initial bill is submitted.

✓ **Any change in caregivers, falls or other activities that disrupt service.** The Havertown Visiting Angels franchise is especially interested in how often it must change caregivers on clients, a number it hopes to keep low. It wants to determine if clients deemed their initial caregivers acceptable.

OCS also enables providers to keep a tally of the number of caregivers interviewed before one is selected.

✓ **When and why a client was discharged.**

Meigs says he's very interested in determining the average amount of time his agency keeps clients compared to others.

Though OCS's forms ask an open-ended question, Serter expects to see money, a need for skilled nursing, hospitalization or a need for some facility-based care as common reasons.

## Visiting Angels should use benchmarks it helped develop, Meigs tells franchisees

To kick-start its benchmarking program, OCS is offering a discount to members of the National Private Duty Association. The two-year-old trade association reports now having about 500 members in 44 states [See related item, p. 12].

In response to the offer, an unspecified number of other private duty agencies has since signed up for the benchmarking service, an OCS spokesperson says.

Because their organization helped develop the benchmarking tools, OCS also is offering discounts to Visiting Angels franchisees. Seven Visiting Angels franchise owners started pilot-testing OCS's private duty benchmarking products in September 2003, Meigs tells *PDI*.

OCS rolled out its benchmarking service at Visiting Angel's annual franchise meeting in Las Vegas in June 2004 -- reportedly attended by 160 franchise owners. A larger number of franchisees have since purchased one of OCS's benchmarking products, Meigs says, though he was unable to say how many.

"We wanted to be first in the industry to have a benchmark," says Meigs, though it is up to each individual franchisee to decide whether or not to purchase the program. His appeal to franchisees at the June meeting:

"Do you want to be the last to use a benchmarking system that we helped build." ♦ -- Jason Huffman [jhuffman@decisionhealth.com]