The Challenge

Putnam County Aging Services is a nonprofit agency serving the aged and disabled of central West Virginia. Founded and based in beautiful Putnam County, W.V., they have been providing support and care to seniors and the community across their growing service area since 1975.

Guided by a mission to serve seniors by providing nutritional, social and health-related programs designed to enhance and enrich the quality of their lives, Putnam Aging strives to improve the lives of the aged and disabled as well as ease the difficulty felt by family caregivers on a daily basis. They offer in-home caregivers and transportation services, and operate nutrition sites in counties across central West Virginia. Putnam County Aging Services fights hunger in local communities daily, serving more than 48,000 meals annually both at local senior centers as well as through Meals on Wheels.

When Jenni Sutherland, LSW, joined the organization as executive director in 2015, she found that, in many cases, they were paying full retail for food and supplies and losing a significant amount of money around the food operation, generally the biggest area of spend for most senior centers. She knew this vital service and the business operations around it needed immediate attention.

The Solution

Sutherland had not had much previous experience working with group purchasing organizations (GPOs), but when she met with Anita Smith of Intalere affiliate West Virginia Health Services, she quickly understood that there could be great value in working through their GPO to access cost reduction opportunities.

Smith engaged Intalere’s Nutrition Specialists to undertake a cost study of Putnam County Aging Services’ food costs. “They took our actual food orders and directly compared Intalere’s pricing,” said Sutherland. “In about 90 percent of the cases, the Intalere cost was less. If not, they were able to provide an alternative.”

Based on the Intalere cost study, Putnam was able to negotiate more favorable pricing with current vendors, improve quality by accessing name brands for less, and adjust delivery schedules to maximize savings and efficiencies.

With a clear understanding, and now a “real world” example of the benefits of GPO engagement, Sutherland and Putnam County Aging Services began exploring other areas of opportunities.
Noting that the daily delivery of meals and provision of other services resulted in significant fuel costs for the organization's fleet of vehicles, Sutherland inquired as to whether Intalere was able to offer pricing and services around transportation and fuel costs. “Through an Intalere contract we were able to reduce our fuel costs by six cents per gallon, with no added fees, while also receiving usage reports that helped us to further save by bringing efficiency to our routes,” said Sutherland.

THE OUTCOME

Armed with the knowledge and full understanding of the group purchasing dynamic, Putnam is now “exploring everything,” when reviewing contracts for products and services according to Sutherland. “We recently painted and refreshed one of our buildings using an Intalere contract for paint and supplies,” she said. She also noted that the level of customer service Putnam receives from Smith and the extended Intalere team makes a “big difference” and the total package of service and savings has provided a level of value that has had a significant positive impact on the budget and operations for Putnam County Aging Services.

“The bottom line is we are saving money in every aspect where we are using Intalere. That is an incredible benefit, especially in the case of smaller, non-profit providers, where resources can be severely limited.”

Jenni Sutherland ∙ Executive Director ∙ Putnam County (West Virginia) Aging Services

About Intalere

Intalere’s mission focuses on elevating the operational health of America’s healthcare providers by designing tailored, smart solutions that deliver optimal cost, quality and clinical outcomes. We strive to be the essential partner for operational excellence in healthcare through customized solutions that address customers’ individual needs. We assist our customers in managing their entire spend, providing innovative technologies, products and services, and leveraging the best practices of a provider-led model.