Employee Management in the Hybrid World

Presented by:
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Dr. Courtney Donovan

Dr. Courtney Donovan is a behavioral healthcare executive who specializes in the development and integration of family centered treatment programming targeted specifically for the pregnant and parenting women (PPW) and perinatal populations. Her educational career encompassed many years of learning and researching at Alaska Pacific University, where she earned both her bachelorette and master’s degrees, and at Walden University where Dr. Donovan earned her doctoral degree. Her 20+ year career in Alaska’s behavioral health arena has extended across the many facets and specialties found within the field; however, her passion for family preservation and family reunification, as well as her desire to continue investing in and improving the valuable lives of others has kept her at Akeela for over 15 years.

Dr. Donovan has a passion for learning and giving back to her community. She strives to be creative and challenges those around her to be innovative and confident. Always striving to be a change maker, Dr. Donovan is routinely present in our State and our Nation’s Capitols to lead advocacy efforts and to encourage legislation that is sensitive and timely to our goals as a profession. Dr. Donovan presently chairs two, local, Alaskan boards (AAPA, as well as the ACBHC) and is seated on the boards of two national associations (NAADAC and Treatment Communities of America).
Akeela, Inc.

WHO WE ARE
Akeela, Inc., founded in 1974, is one of Alaska's most diverse Behavioral Health companies. We provide outpatient and residential substance use treatment for community populations in Anchorage and Ketchikan and a wide range of outpatient mental health services. Mental health services for adults and children are provided in Anchorage, and a full range of mental health services are provided in Ketchikan, including general mental health for adults and youth, emergency psychological services, and services for adults with severe/chronic mental illness. We also provide transitional housing for mentally ill adults in Ketchikan and for recovering substance users in Anchorage.

FOCUS ON RECOVERY
Recovery is the goal of all Akeela clinical programs. We give individualized treatment focusing on the clients' primary issue, but also providing supportive services for secondary issues. Working with the community, the State of Alaska, and other supportive services, Akeela offers a holistic approach to treatment designed to assist clients in returning to a productive, safe, and fulfilling life in their community of choice.

WHO IS SERVED
We serve men, women, and children from across Alaska with an emphasis on those living in the Southcentral and Southeast regions. In both of these areas, outpatient services are provided to community members but residential clients travel from all over the state, joining local clients receiving services.

CONTINUUM OF CARE
Akeela prides itself on providing one of the stronger continuum of care programs in Alaska. In our Anchorage substance use programs, Akeela provides services across the spectrum to those individuals needing the lowest level of treatment through those requiring the most intense, residential treatment. Additionally, women are provided gender specific treatment and in our women's programs, service is offered to the whole family. In recognition of the growing number of clients who experience co-occurring disorders now being served in our substance use programs, we offer mental health services in Anchorage.

In our Ketchikan programs, the ratio is reversed. We serve the whole range of mental health problems, while providing smaller substance use programs that serve clients needing the lowest level of treatment up to intense residential service. Regardless of location, all of our substance use services are provided aftercare services.

In recognition that many clients coming out of substance use treatment have little in the way of resources, we provide transitional housing for them in Anchorage, and we offer transitional housing for severely mentally ill clients in Ketchikan. If our services do not adequately meet the needs of the clients we serve, we have established a broad range of agreements through which we are able to refer clients for additional services.

The pandemic radically changed the landscape for behavioral healthcare workers. Pre-existing norms were shattered. The goal for today’s session is to discuss what employee management looks like, now, in a hybrid world.

Objectives that will be covered:

- **Learning Objective 1**: Participants will gain understanding on how to maintain relationships with employees who are 100% remote.

- **Learning Objective 2**: Participants will gain an understanding on how to onboard a fully remote employee.

- **Learning Objective 3**: Participants will learn ways to accommodate unique employee needs when a distance work option is available.

- **Learning Objective 4**: Participants will learn some potential red flags with fully distance employment and how to address those issues as they arise.
Learning Objective 1
Participant will gain understanding on how to maintain relationships with employees who are 100% remote

Remote work doesn’t mean being isolated.

Simply put, being part of a team means you’re part of the team! Even when the rest of your team is scattered around the globe, remote employees can still build positive relationships with their coworkers.

However, a team will only ever be as strong as its leadership; therefore, developing a deep, broad understanding of how to build and maintain relationships with a fully-remote workforce is crucial in the post-pandemic era we currently find ourselves in.

Intentional Communication

Easily, one of the biggest challenges remote workers face is remembering to keep in touch! Set aside time once a week to check in with your boss and coworkers to talk shop—or not talk shop.

For example, schedule a virtual coffee break or lunch with coworkers.

But, also, set aside dedicated weekly time to bring your team together to specifically talk shop.

For example, establish weekly huddles with your team members to provide a consistent and routine venue for challenges and accomplishments to be discussed, for upcoming projects to be planned, and for debriefings to occur.
Write Well

It is a known fact that remote workers use written communication more than any other format.

However, it’s essential that when you use written communications, you write well, especially when writing to your coworkers.

Also, “writing well” means more than using proper grammar and ensuring your writing is clear (although, those are certainly important).

Pitfalls of Written Communication

✔ There are no verbal cues.
   You can’t see how someone on the other end of your email takes your jokes!
   And, even when you don’t mean to, sometimes, written communications can come off as curt when you stick with “just the basics.”
Luckily, there are workarounds to help you build strong relationships with your remote colleagues:

*For example, resist treating written communications as a “shortcut” to effective communications.*

Make sure you’re “softening” your message, even when you aren’t bringing up a difficult topic.

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**Consider the following:**

*Ken: I need those numbers by Friday, please. Thanks, Dave*

Of course, out of context, this message is kind of harsh. Therefore, just like you might do in a real conversation, make an effort to be **personable and friendly**. Even if it’s perfunctory, it can make all the difference in how your message (and you!) are perceived—especially on a Monday morning.

*Morning Ken: Hope you had a great weekend! Please have those numbers to me by Friday. Thanks so much! Dave*

Ken still has work to do this week. But, by adding a friendly notation at the front, along with a “please” to the request, suddenly, the message doesn’t seem so harsh or demanding.
**Know When the Written Word Won’t Cut It**

The other major pitfall of written communications is that sometimes, it’s easy to get lost in the back and forth of the messages.

Whether it’s an asynchronous email or a slightly more synchronous instant message chat, it’s easy to lose track of who is saying what. And when that happens, you can find yourself chatting “at” somebody instead of “with” somebody.


Written communications are the go-to when you’re remote; however, just because they’re common or easier to use, it’s essential to recognize that sometimes, written messaging just won’t cut it.

When written communications—no matter the platform—are getting confused, heated, or no one knows what’s what, it’s time to acknowledge that fact. Then **pick up the phone (or, even better, start a video chat)** to clear up any written communication frustrations.
Switch to Video

- On that same note, one of the great advantages of technology is that video chats are now possible for anyone with the right equipment and a decent internet connection. While video conferencing technology isn’t perfect, it can help to build strong relationships with remote employees when used in the proper scenarios (and yes, there are good and bad times for video depending on the circumstances).

- Video has the advantage of giving you those visual cues you often miss with written and even verbal communications.

- While using video chat might be distracting at first (Insert internal dialogue: What is my hair doing? I wonder if they heard my dog bark. How many chins do I have??), once you get used to it, you’ll probably find that a virtual meeting is much like being in the same room as your coworkers.

- Over time, those video chats will help you grow and strengthen your team relationships.

Don’t Be All Business

- One of the best things about working in an office (yes, there can be positives) is the opportunity for random conversations to happen.

- To avoid “all work and no play” conversations, make some time in every meeting to have a “personal” chat. Icebreaker questions are a great way to start any virtual meeting to build relationships with remote employees (What’s your favorite food? Where is your favorite place to travel? What’s the most daring thing you’ve ever done?).

- It’s also important to ask the right questions. Specifically, try to avoid asking yes or no questions. Try to ask open-ended questions that are personal, but not too personal.

For example, instead of saying, are you looking forward to the weekend ask what they have planned for the weekend and build conversation from there.

- Give people a chance to talk as much (or as little) as they like. Over time, you’ll find that these conversations help create bonds with your coworkers.
Meet In Real Life (IRL)

Building relationships with fellow remote employees doesn’t mean that you’re required to only meet online. When calendars and budgets allow, giving consideration to hosting in-person company-sponsored retreats, strategic planning sessions, and annual meetings, can go a long way towards building and strengthening a team.

However, this doesn’t have to mean always having to spend big bucks to hang out with your team. It’s possible some of your team already lives nearby; so, arrange to meet somewhere in the middle for coffee or lunch. You can do it once a week, once a month, or simply twice a year if that’s all you can manage.

Or, if you’re headed somewhere for a conference or training, see if you’ve got coworkers that live near your destination and make plans to hang out. Spending a few hours with a remote team member while you’re already in their neck of the woods can help you build a strong and lasting professional relationship with that person.

Learning Objective 2

Participants will gain an understanding on how to onboard a fully remote employee.

Over time, the recent coronavirus pandemic changed almost everything. In fact, the pandemic has been, quite possibly, the single most significant driver of rapid change for American businesses in history. Three years ago, seemingly overnight, workers were sent home and an immense transition was underway.

In 2023, new post-pandemic norms have settled in; hybrid and fully remote employees are the way of the future. The sudden need to work remotely shattered all previously-held expectations of the “typical” full-time job in behavioral healthcare and this new trend in Alaska’s behavioral healthcare field has resulted in our companies needing to quickly adapt and evolve to this significant change in our landscape.
Set your company up to succeed by evolving your recruitment strategies

Effective recruiting is more than simply posting a job vacancy onto digital platforms.

Have clearly defined goals.
- Who is your target audience?
- Research and use the correct keywords.
- Fully utilize technological tools.
- Ensure that job openings are posted on relevant platforms.
- Track your results and use the data to inform your future endeavors.

Highlight your organizational values and culture

This helps to attract applicants whose goals are in alignment with those of the company.

Doing so will increase hiring efficiency; therefore, saving time and money, creating a positive work environment, improving retention, and increasing work productivity and accuracy.

Recruiting the right people into your company will do wonders for its growth and assist in achieving low employee turnover.
Introduce an employee referral and sign-on bonus programs

An employee referral program is a system of rewarding employees who refer and bring in new candidates for relevant positions.
- This reward is usually provided once the candidate is hired.
- Such a program increases your chances of getting suitable candidates and, at the same time, ensures that they know a lot about your company culture—the candidate’s chances of being a good fit for your organization increase.

Consider introducing a sign-on bonus program for new hires.
- This reward is usually provided once the new employee has reached their 90-day milestone to limit the amount of exposure to risk for the company.
- A sign-on bonus is often an attractive notion for a candidate who has competing employment offers.
- While there is an upfront cost associated with sign-on bonuses, these are typically outweighed by the long-term gains of filling empty positions and increasing your company’s retention rate.

Use social media

Social media platforms, like LinkedIn and Twitter, have increasingly become primary sources of good talent and are often the simplest form of interaction with potential new applicants.

Through social media posts, instead of sending out spammy emails, your company can focus on posting job openings on these platforms. It results in more direct interaction and attracts more candidates.
Provide upfront job descriptions that are compelling and concise

Refining and updating job descriptions has long been a routine practice amongst all of our companies; however, with the ever-lasting impacts the coronavirus pandemic had on the workforce, less-traditional job postings have gained much popularity and have attracted more qualified applicants.

For example, many companies are finding that, along with traditional compensation and benefits packages, potential employees are also ranking work-life balance, company culture, and corporate values highly in their decision-making processes.

Host virtual interviews & no longer consider location a barrier

For most businesses, the face of job recruitment has shifted significantly. Whether used as a supplemental effort or a second phase of the hiring process, many companies have adopted video interviews in lieu of in-person meetings.

Video-conferencing platforms can allow multiple people in remote locations to participate simultaneously and evaluate job candidates in an ever-more-common environment.

Location is no longer a barrier

Along with the ability to reach a greater pool of talent, when expanding your workforce with remote workers, location no longer serves as a barrier to attracting candidates.
Integrate a "Remote Work" policy

Remote workers are still a relatively new concept for most companies to adapt to. Many organizations find themselves still in the learning curve of making these adjustments.

Things to consider when developing and implementing a remote work policy:

- **Eligibility**: What positions are eligible to work remotely?
- **Availability**: What scheduled hours/time zone is the remote employee adhering to?
- **Responsiveness**: What is an acceptable response time?
- **Productivity measures**: How will outcomes (vs hours) be measured?
- **Equipment**: What are the technological expectations of your new remote hire?
- **Tech support**: Outline a plan of what a remote employee is expected to do when having technical difficulties.
- **Physical environment**: Outline the remote workers’ physical environment expectations plainly in policy.

Welcoming New Remote Workers
Ensure equipment is adequate, secure, and ready.

- All software and tools, including VPN access, should already be installed on the employees’ devices, because if they are working remotely they cannot simply stop by the organization’s IT department for quick assistance.
- A big problem with remote work is security. When working at your company’s main offices, most work on secure networks, but when information is taken out of the office, security is not guaranteed.
- If companies have specific requests, for example if they don’t want employees working on public Wi-Fi, then that should be stated clearly in the policy.

Send A Welcome Package

Consider sending a welcome package with some company swag and local goodies from the company’s main location. Another idea is hosting a virtual luncheon during their first day, or asking teammates to record welcome messages or videos and send them to the new employee’s inbox on day one.
Recreate In-Office Experiences Virtually

Think about all of the small personal touches employees would usually experience in the office and bring them to life. Setting up virtual meet-and-greets for new employees is an interactive way to introduce co-workers to their newest team member. Making introductory announcements during team meetings, as well as using your company’s newsletter as forum for a self-introduction, are also great ways to welcome a new staff member into the fold!

Build A Community

Focus on building community and fostering human connections. This can be accomplished in a number of ways; however, an example could be creating “Teams” channels for cohorts of new hires to ask questions and get to know each other. Additionally, offering group volunteer opportunities, helping new hires make philanthropic investments in their local communities while also building, and nurturing, a sense of community within your own organization.
Beyond Onboarding,
Ensure Integration

It was mentioned earlier and will likely be mentioned many more times before this presentation is through... **Communicate, communicate, and communicate some more!**

- Get to Know Your Remote Workers
- Provide Acknowledgement and Support
- Be Accessible
- Bring into your corporate office when you can
Get to Know Your Remote Workers

Some remote workers will require more interaction while others might thrive on independence. By understanding what makes them tick, our approaches can be individually tailored to leverage their personal style.

Provide Acknowledgement and Support

Some may prefer it be private while others seek more public acknowledgement; regardless, we all need and want to be acknowledged. Make certain you have a process in place to regularly provide meaningful acknowledgement to your remotes.
Be Accessible

- Supervisors and managers play a critical role when it comes to remote team members. They’re in the best position to provide clear expectations while becoming an important link between the remote and the rest of the team.

- Also, it is important to ensure strong and successful integration, make sure your remote workers know who to go to when they need help.

Bring into your corporate office when you can.

Most remote employees appreciate the opportunity to visit the company’s main office. The opportunity to meet “face to face” goes a long way in developing relationships. It’s also an important way of reinforcing where and how the team member fits into the larger team.
OUR STORY

• The mission of Turning Point Counseling Services is to provide high quality treatment to those suffering from Mental Illness and/or Addiction. We believe that a person is not the sum of their problems and that recovery is possible for everyone; that the Diseases of Mental Illness and Addiction impact the whole family; and that a person’s recovery from these illnesses improves the quality of life for their entire family and everyone they interact with socially and occupationally. Turning Point provides a community resource that helps to facilitate quality of life improvements for community members and families. Using an individualized approach that honors ones’ strengths and spirit, we provide a range of therapy and education experiences that move our clients toward wellness.
OUR PHILOSOPHY

- Relationship is the foundation of what we do
- Family atmosphere among staff
- A team approach to holistic, integrated care
- High level of training and broad scope of practice
- Evidence based practices- compassion combined with clinical excellence
- Excellent administrative services

TURNING POINT COUNSELING SERVICES

- Assessment and referral
- Individual counseling for mental health including SUD
- Intensive outpatient substance treatment
- Naturopathic medicine
- Trauma sensitive yoga
WHO WE ARE AT TURNING POINT

• Executive board
• Naturopathic doctor
• 17 Masters level clinicians and interns
• Meditation and yoga teachers
• Reception, billing and general admin support

TYPES OF INTERVENTIONS

• Cognitive behavioral therapy/dialectical behavioral therapy
• Brainspotting
• Trauma center trauma sensitive yoga
• Heart math
• Play therapy
• Art therapy
• Narrative therapy
• Intensive outpatient for SUD
• 12 step facilitation, motivational interviewing
UNIQUE ACCOMMODATIONS

ASK THEM!
WHAT ARE YOUR NEEDS IN ORDER TO BE SUCCESSFUL??

- Materialistic needs
- Social needs
- Employment needs
- Supervision needs
FINANCIALLY BACK THEM

- To the best of your company’s ability
- Encourage them to set up their home office space to be almost identical to an in-office space.

TRAINING

- Company made webinars per department
- Make yourself available
- Invest in remote trainings for clinical staff (major employee incentive)
RED FLAGS/CONCERNS WITH REMOTE

- Engagement/Attunement from therapists during sessions
  - Call your patients and ask them about their experience on Zoom with their provider. You might be surprised what feedback you receive.

- Internet connection (this can be very problematic for patient/therapist “connection”)
  - Call your patients and ask them about their internet connectivity and adjust accordingly.
CONFIDENTIALITY/COMPLIANCE

- Credentials to provide telehealth
  HIPAA Compliant platforms (Zoom, Facetime, Simple Practice, Doxyme)
- Home office: is it a confidential, locked, space?
- Documentation requirements:
  - **Suggested template at the beginning of each session note:** "Patient participated in today’s session via telehealth on HIPAA compliant Zoom. Identity of patient and their privacy was confirmed. Patient consents to telehealth. Patient’s location is _____. Provider’s location is in his/her confidential home office in (city), (STATE). Provider has a valid AK LPC or LCSW #_______ (license number)."

TRUST

- Do you trust your employee to honestly work from home?
- Do you feel the need to micromanage your employees who are distant?
- Ways to build trust: be honest and ask for what you need to build that trust. Not everyone starts off with full trust. As administrators we want to see productivity and completion of tasks at hand.
- Quality of work: pay attention to the quality of work you see. Some agencies experience lower quality of work with employees working from home vs in the office.
TIME ZONE DIFFERENCES

- Not a big red flag issue, but something to take into consideration when communicating with your employees and they are communicating with you.

WHY TELEHEALTH OVER FACE-TO-FACE?

- Often times when a clinic has face-to-face or telehealth options for providers, patients seem to gravitate to the in-person option. So how do we keep our remote clinicians with full caseloads?

- Don’t start with justifying and selling telehealth, start with selling the provider. Their skillset, specializations, experience, flexibility, certifications, and licenses speak for themselves. If we are telling patients we have a provider that is highly trained and experienced in what the patient is struggling with, telling the patient the provider is virtual should not be too big of a deal if they want the best person for the job.
CONNECTION & RELATIONSHIP

- Invite employees into the main office
- Meet with them telephonic or virtually weekly
- Converse with them regularly but casually
- INCLUDE THEM
- Ask, ask, ask (develop that personal/professional relationship)
- Fly them up once a year if your company can afford it!
- Reassure them!

Gunnar Ebbesson, co-founder of Turning Point, believes that love is the vessel that holds this work together and makes it possible.

The healing of trauma must happen within a healthy relationship. As leaders and staff members, we GET TO be a part of that healthy relationship, and see that healing happen first-hand.