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Meet Carlos E. Varela: ‘Well-steeped in a culture of compliance and ethics’

by Carlos E. Varela, JD, and Debbie Troklus

DT: What is your background?

CV: I am a lawyer by training with a specialization in compliance and environmental law. Over the course of my career, I’ve developed a strong affinity for compliance matters, driven by my deep passion for the healthcare industry. I’ve consistently sought to align my professional endeavors with a broader sense of purpose. This inclination towards meaningful work led me to seamlessly transition to an executive role within the mental health industry.

DT: Tell us about your role.

CV: I am the CEO of INSPIRA Behavioral Care Corp. and INSPIRA Mental Health Management Inc. (collectively referred to as “INSPIRA”), both are Keralty-owned corporations. As CEO of INSPIRA, the cultivation and alignment of the organizational culture is central to my responsibilities as CEO of INSPIRA. My background in compliance ensures that culture is well-steeped in a culture of compliance and ethics. I am entrusted with the task of assembling and leading dynamic teams, equipping them with the necessary resources and motivation to realize the company’s objectives. This involves a continuous cycle of goal setting, performance measurement, and iterative refinement.

In the immediate operational context, I navigate my daily decisions based on a set of key performance indicators (KPIs). These KPIs encompass diverse dimensions, ranging from market share percentages and financial metrics, such as top-line revenue and profitability, to quality indicators, like discharge rates and clinical outcomes, and, of course, a series of compliance and ethics-related KPIs. Privacy and security are paramount to all healthcare-related services, but especially for mental health because of the stigma frequently attached. These quantifiable benchmarks provide essential guidance in steering our course.

However, in the broader context of my role as the CEO of a mental health enterprise, the ultimate measure of success is encapsulated by the number of individuals positively impacted and assisted by our services. This perspective underlines the greater mission of our organization, which centers on improving the lives of those we serve.

DT: What interested you in compliance and influenced your decision to enter the compliance field?

CV: My interest in compliance emerged as an unexpected but invigorating opportunity within a novel industry landscape. The healthcare sector introduced me to a domain marked by its complexities and distinctive characteristics from anything I had experienced to that point in my career.

As a compliance professional, my journey commenced when I was tasked, somewhat serendipitously, with spearheading the management of a client audit. The audit prominently featured compliance-related issues, prompting a profound realization. While the company largely adhered to the pertinent rules and regulations, I recognized fragmentation across various departments. Compliance was dispersed among quality, clinical operations, legal, human resources (HR), and IT, each playing a part, yet the orchestration was not centralized.

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