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Departmental Policy Review as a CQI Process

by *Mary Hubbert and Deborah Huseman*

Did you know the Departmental Policy Review Process is actually a CQI process? Policies and procedures require regular “maintenance” or they begin to be less relevant or may no longer have any relevance if they have not been revised to keep up with changes in rules, regulations, law, or standards of best practice. The steps a policy goes through to become implemented requires a lot of **CQIs!!**

The Departmental Policy Review is an important step that ensures policies, procedures, documents and forms are updated with current DCS practices and procedures. A good policy review ensures there is an opportunity for feedback by others who may view the policy or document from another important perspective. Policy owners gather stakeholders to assist with the initial development or revision of a policy or related document. When the workgroup feels the policy or document is ready for field input, it is distributed for a statewide review to each Policy Review Coordinator. This phase of the development process is one step to ensure these documents are not developed in a silo.

Each region, facility, division, unit or provider has a designated Policy Review Coordinator who ensures that review requests are sent to their stakeholders for review and comment. Those stakeholders submit their comments back through their Policy Review Coordinator for submission to the DCS Policy Development Unit (PDU). All comments are passed on to the policy owner for consideration. When that process is completed, the multidisciplinary Policy Review Committee takes a final comprehensive review of the policy revisions or the new policies. This group looks for consistency with practice, inclusion of federal or state requirements and potential conflicts in practice between programs. If potential conflicts are found, the committee makes recommendations to the policy owner. After policies are reviewed and recommended for approval by the Policy Review Committee, the PDU staff submits those policies to Legal staff, each Deputy Commissioner, each Executive Director and the Commissioner for final approval.

So, the policy review process is really a CQI process! It ensures DCS staff are actively involved in the development and “maintenance” of policies, procedures, documents and forms so that they are relevant to the work you do each day. The Policy Development Unit encourages all DCS staff to be active participants when policies are issued for review.





“Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything.”

- George Bernard Shaw -



Social Worker's Corner

Every one of us experiences transitions throughout our lives. We transition from childhood to adolescence then adulthood. We transition from one role to another in both our personal and professional lives. Each time we transition there are things that we have to plan for, things we have to know, in order to make the transition a success. The children and families that we serve are no different.

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics speaks to how it is our role as Social Workers to assure that we do not abandon our clients who are still in need of services. According to the NASW we should always give careful consideration to all factors in the situation of the client to minimize any adverse effects when we are looking to transition them from our caseloads. This would include not only transitioning the child to permanency, but also transitioning the child to a new Social Worker.

Transitions are also an important aspect evaluated during our Quality Service Reviews (QSR). Our QSR protocol looks at if and how transitions are being planned and implemented to assure timely and successful adjustments. In order to properly plan for transitions, it is the role of the Social Worker to identify any stressors to the child of family that may create problems during or after the transition.

Once those stressors are identified, then it is the role of the Child and Family Team to identify supports so that those stressors can be alleviated. Having an appropriate back-up plan is also important when planning for transitions. Change happens. Often it is unexpected, and when the team has all of their proverbial eggs in one basket you are left back at the starting line; when, instead, you should be nearing the finishing line.

Contract Provider Survey

The Contract Provider Survey has been completed for 2010. The Directors of the Performance Based Contractors were each sent a link via e-mail for the survey, and challenged to get a minimum of twenty of their employees to complete the survey. There were a total of seventy-two surveys completed. While this number was lower than hoped for, it was in actuality the highest number of returned surveys from contract providers since the Office of Performance and Quality Improvement began distributing the survey.

A recurring theme from the respondents of this survey was that they felt the survey was difficult to fill out due to the fact that their responses would differ depending upon the region they were basing their answers on. Therefore, it could be beneficial for each region to conduct their own survey of providers in their regions in order to get an accurate picture of their regions responses.

A copy of the survey report is available to CQI Teams for review. To get a copy of the survey report, please contact your Regional CQI Coordinator. *(Continued on page 3)*

Contract Provider Survey *(Continued from page 2)*

Some of the responses from the quantitative questions of the Contract Provider Survey include:

- 84.8% of respondents feel that DCS staff treats them fairly and with respect.
- 38.3% of respondents feel that DCS staff returns their phone calls within a reasonable time frame.
- 66.7% of respondents feel that DCS tries to arrange meetings at places and times that are convenient for them.
- 86.1% of respondents feel that DCS staff care about the children and families that they work with.
- 98.6% of respondents stated that they make certain that the children in their agencies are able to maintain ties to their own culture and community while in their placements.

Some of the responses from the qualitative questions of the Contract Provider Survey included”

- I am seeing more teaming with provider agencies than ever before.
- Some FSWs are very easy to work with. Others are very hard to work with.
- There appears to be no communication between Central Office and front line DCS staff.
- Every region is different and sometimes within a region, every county is different in how they interpret policy.
- Unfortunately many workers appear to treat children as paper and not as individuals.

State CQI

The State CQI Team met on November 18th for their fourth quarter meeting. There were a number of items on the agenda for the meeting. One of the areas that was discussed was the Council on Accreditation Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) around our Human Resources Plan.

As most employees will remember one of the requirements of COA accreditation was for the majority of the DCS workforce to have their MSSW degrees or the equivalent human services graduate degree. William Haynes, Executive Director of Human Resource Development, reported that we had agreed to have at least 100 employees enrolled in the MSSW Stipend Program or a COA approved graduate program in the human services field. DCS has met that goal.

Another goal of our MOU was to increase the availability of MSSW programs across the state. Currently we have seven school that are involved in the Department’s Stipend Program. The University of Tennessee has also begun utilizing distance education. This allows employees in most every region to have access to one of these programs.

(Continued on Page 5)



*“We must accept
finite
disappointment,
but we must
never lose
infinite hope.”*

*- Dr. Martin
Luther King, Jr. -*



CQI Coordinators Meeting



The CQI Coordinators from across the state met in Nashville for a week-long training in early January. This was the first CQI Coordinator training to be held since January 2007. Although, the winter weather was not very cooperative while everyone was there, the comments about the training were all very positive.

The training began with a full day of DiSC training. This training was conducted by Donna Johnson, and was designed to get everyone thinking about strategically building CQI teams based on each member's own work style and personality. CQI Coordinators were also trained on the Department's Performance Improvement Plan, Field Focus, and using Quality Service Review data to improve outcomes for children and families.

Peter Watson and Ruth Huebner of the National Child Welfare Resource Center of Organizational Improvement (NRCOI) were also in attendance for part of the training. Peter and Ruth spoke to the group about quality improvement and assurance trends throughout the nation, how other states are using data to improve outcomes, and guided discussions around how we can improve upon our own continuous quality improvement system.

It was very beneficial for everyone at the meeting to get some feedback from NRCOI on the strengths and opportunities for improvement DCS has with our current CQI program. It was noted that we are one of the top four states in the nation in regards to our CQI structure. That was something that made all of us who have been a part of the CQI process very proud.

The CQI Coordinators and the Central Office CQI Unit then worked together on a plan to streamline the CQI process and make it even more effective. We would like to ask for everyone's cooperation as we work to move the CQI process to the next level.

State CQI *(Continued from page 3)*

The Department also agreed to fund the Stipend Program at a minimum of the same levels that it was being funded at the time of our COA review. Currently the Department allows employees to count up to six hours on the clock for attending classes. This six hours also included travel to and from class. This six hours, however, can not be utilized for study time or any other activities. Approval for the six hours on the clock are at the discretion of the Regional Administrator or Executive Director.

The Department also agreed to having 35–40 employees graduating each year with graduate degrees that meet COA requirements. We are now beginning to meet this goal. We have also begun hiring more employees who already possess MSSW degrees or other graduate human services degrees. Promotions from within DCS are also going to give preference to those who have approved graduate degrees.

One last item that is currently being worked on, is to change the job specifications so that new hires, as well as Case Manager 3s, Team Leaders, and Team Coordinators will be given priority on registers if they possess an approved graduate degree. There will be an exception process to this, however, as some regions still have a lack of availability in potential employees with graduate degrees. These exceptions will be on a case-by-case basis, however, and will have to be approved by the Office of Human Resource Development.

The State CQI Team also discussed how it was very important the Regional Administrators develop close relationships with the school in their regions that are part of the Stipend Program. Having strong relationships between these schools and the regions can allow for a smoother working relationship, that will in turn allow the process of obtaining a graduate degree less complicated for employees.

Employees who are interested in obtaining further information about the MSSW Stipend Program can obtain additional information from the DCS Intranet under the Personnel web page.



“A man who has committed a mistake and doesn’t correct it is committing another mistake.”

- Confucius -

**The CQ Eye
Would Like to
Welcome
Kathryn “Kate” O’Day
As Our New
DCS Commissioner !!!**

The CQI Unit would like to thank everyone who completed the CQI Survey during the months of November and December.

We had one of the highest numbers of surveys completed in the history of doing this survey.

Please watch for the Employee Appreciation Survey, as it will be sent out to each of you within the next few months.



DEPARTMENT OF
CHILDREN'S SERVICES



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“ In all affairs, love, religion, politics or business, it’s
a healthy idea, now and then, to hang a question
mark on things that you have long taken for
granted.”

- Bertrand Russell

“ It always seems impossible until it is done.”

- Nelson Mandela -

Hats Off to Phi Alpha Honor Society!

by Carren Pirtle, Knox County Resource Linkage

The Community Advisory Board (CAB) and the Volunteer Advisory Board (VAB) for the Knox County Department of Children Services would like to say “Thank You” to the members of the Phi Alpha Honor Society.

Phi Alpha Honor Society hosted a drive at the University of Tennessee to collect items for a clothing room at Children Services. In addition they donated a basket to Children’s Services Annual Basket auction. In all with the items collected and the basket, they contributed more then \$400.00 to Children’s Services.

Our hearts are grateful that college students would make such a sacrifice that will have a great impact on many children and families.

