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The Power of Community *by Servella Terry*

Neely Williams, a minister and community organizer out of Davidson County, states that community is a composite of all different elements: its churches, families, service providers, schools. Every institution that serves individuals that inhabit a community serves as the basis of that community.

Each region has a responsibility to forge and maintain healthy relationships as well as ongoing engagement with local communities. Include the community in your daily practice and find ways to invite community partners to the table. Your informal supports can be found within local communities (i.e. food pantries, safe houses, after school programs, mom and pop child care). Informal supports are a large part of the Quality Service Review that is conducted in states across the nation. Building informal supports helps improve the outcomes for our families by increasing engagement, teaming, and resource linkage.

The Division of Community Partnerships and the Office of Child Safety convened regional summits in the three grand divisions. These summits gave opportunity for Resource Linkage Coordinators to present the great work they are doing with local Community Advisory Boards.

It was clearly stated during these summits that our rural communities struggle and are in need of resources due to lack of employment and public transportation, just to name a few. Communities in

southwest Tennessee have become very creative by tapping into to federal stimulus money. Local businesses employed teenagers this past summer. The elderly benefited from the restoration and weatherization of their houses. The faith-based community organized a very effective community resource program to aid needed families.

Our communities are necessary in every venue of our work. In my opinion a child welfare agency should consider co-location in communities to minimize stressors on families. These co-locations can be in churches, Boys and Girls Clubs, Senior Citizens programs, and any other available community facilities. When we establish regular contact with communities we stand a better chance of building trust needed to keep our children safe and in their own communities.

Regions should put emphasis and focus on our youth. These youth come from local communities where they have over the years established relationships and ties that are valuable to them. If we are serious about reunification and permanency then there must be a paradigm shift from what we think about the child's community and family to understanding how community is part of that child's identity and culture.

In summary I highly recommend that the staff view the "Power of the Community" DVD. A copy can be obtained from Tennessee Center for Child Welfare.





*“Do not go
where the path
may lead,
go instead where
there is no path
and leave a
trail.”*

*- Ralph Waldo
Emerson -*



Social Worker's Corner DCS Values: Commitment to Excellence by *Tony Nease, MSW*

The Department expects peak performance from all levels of staff, every day and in every degree. This is how the Department defines our value of commitment to excellence. But, why do we strive for excellence when just being status-quo is so much easier?

The answer to that question is simple. We are all professionals. Social Work is a profession, not just a job. After all, you expect excellence from others don't you?

Do you want your Dentist or Doctor to be just so-so? Are you okay with the Plumber or Electrician doing sub-standard work on your home? Are you okay with the Hair Stylist just “going through the motions” and not really listening to what you want? Obviously you don't.

You want to receive great customer service and have someone providing that service who knows what they are doing. You want someone who will go that extra mile and put forth a little more effort to make sure that your needs are met. Isn't that what the children and families we serve deserve? Isn't that what the citizens of Tennessee whose taxes help pay our salaries deserve?

The road to excellence is not an easy one. It requires dedication and commitment to being the best you can be at all times. It means persevering on even on those days that you just don't want to get out of bed. It means really looking at the work you do and evaluating it subjectively to see if you really are providing excellence as a Civil Servant and a Social Worker.

In addition to self-evaluation, excellence is achieved by others evaluating the work that you do. It's very hard to let others look at the work we do and have them give their opinions on that work, or share ratings from various evaluations the Department uses to gage the service delivery system or the specific work that we do.

The strive for excellence is something that the Tennessee Department of Children's Services is not alone in working towards. Most state child-welfare systems are making strides towards providing excellence to the residents of their states.

Tennessee, as well as those other states, are moving closer to their goals of improving their service delivery system. Most states now have some form of Continuous Quality Improvement. The CQI program is one of many different mechanisms employees have available to them to help improve outcomes and move closer to excellence.

Many states are also now using a form of the Quality Service Review, Peer Review, and Case Process Reviews. All of these are being utilized in order to improve performance and reach for excellence in service delivery.

The push for excellence requires hard work and dedication from us all. It also requires utilizing the tools that we have to constantly seek to improve what we do. This is not something that we do just to maintain accreditation or until another administration comes along. This is something that we do as professional Social Workers, to better help those that we are in this profession to serve. We do this because it is the right thing to do.

Mid-Cumberland CQI Team Digs Deep *by Andrea Baker*

The Well Being Unit CQI Team is a dedicated team of individuals in the Mid-Cumberland Region consisting of Educational Specialists, Interdependent Living Specialists, Services and Appeals Tracking Specialists, Regional Nurses, MSW(s), the Well Being Unit Specialist, CANS Specialists, and the Regional Psychologist. Since October of last year, the WBU CQI Team has been researching a topic that impacts some very basic needs of our children in custody.

The team began pulling individual case samples across all practice areas to look at what barriers FSWs face when trying to obtain immunization records and determine whether a child needs updated immunizations. The availability of updated immunization records is a vital component in ensuring that EPSD&T appointments are well informed events for our children in custody.

One of the trends identified through the research is that teenagers are the age group most commonly without immunization records. Additionally, a factor that can perpetuate this barrier is that per an outcome from a lawsuit, schools must accept children for enrollment even if they do not have immunization records. Therefore, when an FSW contacts a current or prior school to request immunization records, it is not always a guarantee that the school will have that information. This barrier can be even more difficult if the child has moved multiple times and none of the schools have acquired immunization records. Yet another issue faced by FSW(s) pursuing information is the fact that some of our custodial children have never had a Primary Care Physician and therefore, their health records are scattered and infrequent.

The next research step being taken by the WBU CQI team is that they are making a lateral referral to cluster (county) CQI teams and Workgroup (TLs) CQI teams in our region to inquire what barriers their practice units have experienced in this area. The WBU CQI Team plans to continue this well constructed effort to identify barriers experienced in obtaining immunization records. Although this research process can be tedious and time-consuming, the process is providing invaluable information that will support our practice areas across the region. At the end of their research, the team's goal is to implement changes that will remove barriers to the process of acquiring and updating immunization records and improve our ability to ensure our custodial children have this need met more consistently.



“Men often become what they believe themselves to be. If I believe that I can not do something, it makes me incapable of doing it. But, when I believe I can, then I acquire the ability to do it even if I didn't have it in the beginning.”

- Mahatma Gandhi -

Northeast CQI Success Story *by Lagena Rutherford*

Northeast Region had twelve Juvenile Justice and five Social Services youth on runaway status at the beginning of February 2010. This issue was discussed at the Regional CQI meeting that month. Several FSW(s) had discussed in their level one CQI team meeting ideas on ways to find the absconders earlier in the month.

The Regional CQI Team determined that a list of those ideas would be gathered by the team members and would be posted on the Northeast Regional H Drive.

This has been completed and as others come up with new ideas they will be added to the list. The staff has reported

they feel the list has been beneficial and has given them new ideas on how to locate the runaways.

The region had eight Juvenile Justice and six Social Services youth on runaway status by the end of February.



APRIL IS ...

African American Women's Fitness Month

Autism Awareness Month

Celebrate Diversity Month

Child Abuse Prevention Month

Fair Housing Month

Global Child Nutrition Month

Month of the Young Child

National Sexual Assault Awareness Month

Stress Awareness Month

Workplace Conflict Awareness Month

Global Youth Service Days (23rd–25th)

All Fools Day (1st)

Holy Thursday (1st)

National Fun at Work Day (1st)

Good Friday (2nd)

Tangible Karma Day (2nd)

Easter (4th)

ASPCA Day (7th)

National Day of Hope (7th)

World Health Day (7th)

Buddha Day (8th)

National Love our Children Day (10th)

National Sibling Day (10th)

Income Tax Pay Day (15th)

Pet Owner's Day (18th)

Administrative Professionals Day (21st)

Earth Day (22nd)

Arbor Day (24th)

Hairstylist Appreciation Day (30th)

Singing for Their Supper and Other Montgomery County Community Partners Events *by Andrea Baker*

The media tells us that we are recovering from our recession and that our economy is on the upswing, but in the field of social services, that recovery is often difficult to discern. Charitable agencies deeply feel the impact when the economy takes a downturn and the Mid-Cumberland Region of DCS has witnessed that effect as staff scrambles to locate resources to support clients in need.

However, a positive effect of economic challenge is seen in the uniting of agencies and organizations that have formerly not known of each other or worked in partnership previously. Montgomery County has striking evidence of how such a partnership can evolve into a successful endeavor. The Community Partners of Montgomery County not only supports DCS families with occasional needs, but actively seeks individual families they can sponsor for ongoing needs.

One of the outstanding projects in Clarksville that set the bar for success during stressed economic times was an event that brought together many agencies. Ms. Edith Kidd of the First Missionary Baptist Church shared comments about a Community Partners project that supported many of our DCS families and will continue to support them as the success of the event has prompted it to become an annual event. The project was titled "Sing For Their Supper" and brought together musical talents of all ages and musical genres to benefit the four largest food banks in Clarksville. It also benefitted an agency called "Angel Ministries" which provides enough food (and recipes!) for a month's worth of food for a family of four for \$30.00! Vendors set up at the event with the admission price being donation of canned foods; which further supported the success of the event! Ms. Kidd spoke of

the importance of the fact that the four food banks benefitting from the event were located in varied areas of Clarksville, thus allowing families to gain access closer to their homes and save precious dollars that might otherwise be spent on gasoline to travel further afield. The event will take place in August this year and there is no doubt that our DCS families will again be among those benefitting from this venture!

Still under development is the idea of the Montgomery/Houston CQI Team and the Montgomery Community Partners working together during two upcoming events to spread awareness of the need for Resource Parents and an understanding of what constitutes child abuse and neglect. These two occasions are "[Rivers & Spires](#)" and "[Riverfest](#)" which are well-established annual events that attract people not just from Montgomery County but from surrounding counties as well. This is just another example among many in this motivated, interactive group of agencies that illustrates how communities can be strengthened by forming new partnerships during challenging times.



"We become not a melting pot, but a beautiful mosaic. Different people, different beliefs, different yearnings, different hopes, different dreams."

- Jimmy Carter -



DEPARTMENT OF
CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Putting the Pieces Together

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Birth-parent Survey Responses

The CQI Division of the Office of Performance and Quality Improvement is currently processing the responses from our annual Birth-Parent Survey. Below is a comment from a survey collected in the Northeast Region that we would like to share. We feel that this truly demonstrates what quality, family-centered practice is all about:

"DCS has helped my family not only my son who is in DCS custody but also with our two oldest girls. We've been using a lot of the rules and consequences with them as well, and it has worked. I feel if more people got involved in DCS our kids in this world may be a lot better. If it wasn't for DCS I don't know what my son's life would be like, and they have also helped our family to communicate with each other better. They helped us with our two daughters that are not in the court system but needed better rules and consequences. The family counseling has helped our family. So, thanks for your hard work and taking time to care about our kids and their family."

A loving mom from Johnson City

Congratulations Northeast Region & the Washington County Office.

GroupWise Tip *by Tony Nease, MSW*

Using the state e-mail system is a very valuable way that we communicate with each other. Often times it is much easier when you are going to communicate with a group of individuals over a period of time to develop your own e-mail group in your GroupWise address book. When employees need to communicate with larger groups, regions have their own Regional ALL e-mail group and then there is the DCS ALL e-mail group.

Unfortunately, we have all witnessed those annoying and unnecessary responses back to everyone in the e-mail group from employees asking to be taken off the e-mail list, etc. These unwanted e-mails do nothing but waste valuable time that none of us have to spare.

The State CQI Team had a referral from the South Central Region around finding possible solutions to this issue. What we found out was in order to prevent these responses back to the entire group the sender can send the e-mail to the group as a blind copy (BC). When a group e-mail is sent out as a blind copy any responses to the e-mail go directly to the sender and not the rest of the group. So, those of you who send out e-mails to larger groups of people, please start using this solution. It should save a little time for us all.

If you would like to write an article or share a CQI success story in the CQ Eye Newsletter, please contact Tony Nease or your local CQI Coordinator.

