



QAT QuArTerly

Happy Holidays to All of You!

It is such a busy time of year for every one and the month flies by so quickly. The Region 10 Quality Assurance Staff did not want to let this season pass with out saying thanks to all of you. Your commitment of time and expertise has touched and improved the lives of many individuals. We want to wish you much joy during this holiday time.

Dan Zimmer

LeAnn Bieber

Karen Larson

Laurie Magnus

Deb Niedfeldt



Quality Corner Quiz

1. Should you interview only the people who are listed on the basic information sheet that you receive?
2. Should you encourage or validate the information being shared by the person you are interviewing though such actions as verbal agreement or head nodding?
3. Should you arrange ahead of time with your partner who is going to do what parts at the final meeting?

(Look for the answers in the next few pages)

Director Dan's Notations

Past year Accomplishments:

Often times we tend to share stories of how VOICE Reviews bring positive changes to a person's services and lives. It is not often that we reflect on the body of work we do and the unglamorous statistical data we gather. At Region 10 Quality Assurance our reporting year for DHS is July through June (following the legislative fiscal year). I'd like to share two results from that last year.

We completed 52 **VOICE** Reviews for individuals in our 5 counties. Those reviews had providers receiving E findings in 63 Life Areas. It is great to see that there are so many examples of great supports from our providers. Those reviews also had providers receiving I or C findings in 18 Life Areas (which required Action Plans for improvements). With our improvements in tracking and reviewing Action Plans through the QARC, we feel that issues you raise through your VOICE reviews as a QAT will be worked on and followed up by the person and their Quality Circle.

During the year we had 29 Provider Licensing Reviews due for re-licensing and of those QARC made licensing recommendations for 23 Providers. We have been upfront with everyone involved from our Commission, Counties, Providers and yes, even DHS. We are confident that the strides we made during this last year will enable us to go forward making sure that all licensing recommendations are completed on schedule. We are extremely grateful for your support in completing **VOICE** Reviews on time and with good quality. Another big thanks to those of you that picked up extra **VOICE** Reviews this last year!

2007 Legislation:

Our Legislative Committee continues to work hard to prepare for the next Legislative Session. We are once again drafting legislation for the 2007 session that not only will continue our alternative licensing system through **VOICE** Reviews, but continue our efforts in expanding in Minnesota. As we go forward, we are in need of every QAT's help and support. We need QATs to share success stories of **VOICE** Reviews. We need QATs willing to write short pieces of how you as QATs benefit from doing **VOICE** reviews. We need QATs willing to travel up to St. Paul and share their story with Legislators. If you can support our efforts, big or small, please contact Karen Larson qakaren@msn.com (507) 332-2922

QA Expansion Efforts:

All three areas are making progress in their efforts to bring **VOICE** to their area.

- o Region 1 Quality Assurance. Bemidji Area Trained 8 QATs, Completed 1 **VOICE** Review, 7 **VOICE** Reviews in progress.
- o Region 9 Quality Assurance. Mankato/Fairmont Area Trained 13 QATs, Completed 1 **VOICE** Review, 9 **VOICE** Reviews in progress.
- o Wright/Sherburne Quality Assurance. Trained 5 QATs, 5 **VOICE** Reviews in progress.

Although it is too early to tell the overall impact of the **VOICE** Reviews that were completed, comments from the individuals and Quality Circles involved have been mostly positive and have furthered their understanding on some of the benefits of a **VOICE** Review. As more Reviews are completed in 2007, we are looking forward to seeing the results! Each area is also planning to have more Quality Assurance Team Member Training in either January or February of 2007. If you are in those areas or know someone who is that may be interested in being a QAT, here is some contact information.

Dan Zimmer
Director

In the Spot Light

Getting to Know a QAT

My name is Judy Wandling

I live in LaCrescent, MN. I have three children. My son, Bryce attends Winona State University and my twin daughters, Britney and Paige are Juniors at LaCrescent High School.

I am the Program Manager at ABC Works in Houston County. ABC Works operates two DT&H programs, one in Caledonia and one in LaCrescent. I have been a QAT since 2001. I enjoy doing reviews because of the people I get to meet and the various programs I get to visit. I really like the value based approach that QA uses to assess the quality of life each individual has. I think the VOICE process has helped a lot of people get a little closer to making their hopes and dreams come true!



Judy Wandling

Update:

Action Plans

When the QARC (Quality Assurance Review Committee) reviews an action plan, the plan is either approved or sent back with recommended changes for resubmission.

We have a packet that will help the Quality Circle Members understand what needs to be submitted when they are developing an action plan. If there is an “I” or “C” finding, the QAT will fill out a form and submit it to LeAnn when they return their VOICE Review folders. The QAT will also leave a packet with the Quality Circle that will be submitted to LeAnn by the 30 or 60 day deadline. This packet includes pages for the action plan and the required signatures. This packet will be located in the VOICE Review folder and will be implemented with the next VOICE Review assignments.

If you have questions please contact LeAnn Bieber - Phone: (507) 775-6586
bieber.leann@co.olmsted.mn.us

'CONFIDENTIALITY'

What is confidentiality

With in the context of professional ethics, observing the principle of confidentiality means keeping information given by or about an individual in the course of a professional relationship secure and secret from others.

Reasons to maintain confidentiality

- Personal data are generally recognized as property of the person
Generally, permission from the owner is required to share or use their information.
- The ability to maintain privacy in one's life is an expression of autonomy
The capacity to choose what others know about us, particularly intimate personal details, is important because it enables us to maintain dignity and preserve a measure of control over our lives.
- Confidentiality is seen as central to the maintenance of trust between professional and service user.
Choosing to disclose private, sometimes embarrassing facts in order to seek a benefit is a basic trust issue.
- Keeping confidences promotes open communication
Conversely, revealing or breaking confidences limits and even shuts down communication.
- Confidentiality is particularly important when the revelation has the potential to harm the individual.
Harm can take various forms such as embarrassment, ridicule, discrimination, deprivation of rights, physical or emotional harm, economic harm and loss of roles and relationships.

Anonymised Information

Information is anonymised if it does not identify, **directly** or **indirectly**, the individual to whom it relates. This requires more than simply changing or removing names as combinations of partial identifiers such as personal characteristics, demographics such as initials, date of birth, sex, service provides can reliably identify many individuals.

What does this mean to QAT

As a QAT:

You have made a commitment to keep individuals names and information from **VOICE** Reviews confidential. It is important to the ongoing success of Region 10 Quality Assurance that individuals and service providers have the utmost trust in the maintenance of confidentiality. Trust and open communication are key elements.

You are working with a vulnerable population that often has limited privacy and control in their lives. It is imperative to respect an individual's right to privacy and to respect these relationships.

You are responsible to not inadvertently or directly identify individuals or information from **VOICE** Reviews, either through use of names or identifiers that reliably identify individuals. In a small community of individuals with disabilities and service providers, it is important to be aware of this challenge and the ease that confidentiality can be broken.

Work you do as a QAT plays an important role in improving the Quality of lives of individuals with disabilities. The professionalism you demonstrate in observing the principles of confidentiality garner respect for yourself and Region 10 Quality Assurance.

Quips and Quotes From the QA Manager

Hello!

The new database is almost here! We have a few people testing it to make sure all the bugs are worked out, and then we will roll it out to everyone. I will make up a quick sheet that tells you about the enhancements, or you can attend a database training if you like.

Details for the data base training are listed in the Current Events section of this newsletter.

LeAnn Phone: (507) 775-6586 bieber.leann@co.olmsted.mn.us

Findings Basics

When writing findings:

- **Start with the person** – End with the person. If you get stuck, go back to the person.
- **Write them in first person:** “Amy, we understand you enjoy going out for pie and coffee.”
- **Start with a positive statement** or at least a factual statement with a positive tone.
- **Stick to the facts.**
- **Be objective.** Keep your own judgments out.
- **Write in a positive way,** If you need to write on a challenging issue.
- **End with a positive statement** or at least a factual statement with a positive tone.
- **Use the person’s name:**
 - Only once in a paragraph. Most of the time it works best at the beginning.
 - When you want to get the person’s attention on a certain topic.
- **Be aware of what each support provider’s role and responsibilities are** for supporting the person. For example: the case manager may not know all the intricacies of the person’s day to day activities.
- **Use considerations to improve something** a quality circle member has mentioned to you, even if it is something that is going well but can be even better
- **Write a consideration if a quality circle member is not aware the individual wants improvement** and the issue is not an obvious service the provider should be providing, If a quality circle member is aware and just not working to resolve an issue, that would be an “I” or “C”.
- **Identify and state the issue clearly** if there is an opportunity for improvement from an (I) or concern (C) finding.
- **List the opportunity to improve under the best life area** and not several life areas.
- **Show written evidence** when writing and “I” or “C” finding.
 - Give enough information so the quality circle knows the issue exists
 - Specify what needs to be worked on and improved
 - Let the quality circle comes up with a solution that works, do not be prescriptive.
- **Clarify that the quality circle works as a whole** for an “I” or “C” finding to improve the issue.

(Finding Basics - Continued)

- **Reflect the quality circle members knowledge of the person's needs** in your writing and if they are supportive. For example: "Mary, your case manager is aware..." or "Lori, your guardian is supportive of your relationship with your boyfriend."
- **Go back to the person and what the person feels.** If you are having a hard time writing a finding, determine if you need more information to clarify.

If you still need more direction, call LeAnn.



Quality Corner Answers

1. It is important the you also ask the individual, family, staff, and others if there are other people who should be interviewed as a part of the VOICE review process and not limit yourself to just those listed on the basic information sheet.
2. Be cautious about appearing to validate or agree with the information being shared. You may not present yourself as being objective and may influence what the individual is saying. Another approach to encouraging continued sharing might be to say 'can you tell me more?'
3. It is important both team members know in advance what parts of the final meeting the will be responsible for presenting. No one is caught unprepared, the meeting goes smoother, and every one is much more at ease, in addition you present yourself in a professional manner.

Current Events

QAT Training

January 9th and 10th - All day

January 16th - 11:00 am

Share this opportunity with other people who may be interested in becoming a QAT!

Data Base Training

January 16th - Data Base Training - 11:00 am

This data base training is part of the QAT training, space is limited and is anticipated to fill up fast. If you would like to attend a data base training, but can't on Jan. 16th an other data base training will be set up.

QAT Mentor Training

These are set up on an as needed basis for individuals or small groups.

Contact LeAnn Bieber if you are interested in any of the activities listed above.

Phone: (507) 775-6586 or bieber.leann@co.olmsted.mn.us

Behind the Scenes Look at Licensing

When you are doing a VOICE review, what does that mean? We teach in training that a VOICE review is all about the person. Its purpose is to get the person's voice heard. And yes, that is its purpose.

The other piece to the VOICE review is licensing. We also use these reviews to determine how things are going with a license. They inform the provider of their strengths and what areas they could improve in; so they can provide better services to all individuals they work with. We determine from that process if a license should be renewed and how long that next licensing period will be.

When Quality Assurance began 10 years ago one of our biggest goals was to stay on track with provider licenses. I will tell you this has been a challenge, and we are working hard to make sure we are on track. We get off track when we cannot complete the reviews in the time allotted. If a review is backed up, it will hold up other reviews for that license and ultimately hold up the date the license can be reviewed by the QARC.

How do reviews get backed up? Here are some of the reasons a review may not be completed in a timely basis:

1. Individuals that have been selected for reviews are no longer with the program. Thus, initial paperwork needed from the provider is delayed and the review cannot be scheduled right away
2. Quality circle member unavailable due to such things as vacation or maternity leave
3. QAT availability verses conflicts of interest
4. QA review is delayed in being sent to QAT (yes, I do struggle with this sometimes)
5. QAT backs out of a review
6. QAT has difficulty in scheduling interviews
7. Quality Circle cannot do a final meeting within the 30-day time period expected

I try to take all of this into account when setting up the review schedule so I have buffers in place, but it can be a challenge. Sometimes reviews get flip flopped on the schedule as well. If you see a "What Adds Value" sheet that was written 6 months or more, this may be the reason why. I try to send those out a month before a review, but that doesn't always work.

So where are we with our licenses?

As of December 1st, we will have 3 out of 85 licenses that will not be complete for QARC in their licensing period. Those 3 licenses will be caught up by March 2007. When we say they are not complete, it simply means that all the pieces needed to send a license to QARC have not completed. All licenses we have contact with at least 3 times within a licensing period and many at least 5 times or more.

A little background about what we do for a license verses the traditional licensing system. Please keep in mind we do Quality Assurance *and* licensing; DHS does licensing. My intentions here are not negative to DHS in any way. We have two different focuses with a licensing overlap. Yet, the Quality Assurance piece gives us that much more involvement with our providers.

In both systems:

New license – reviewed in a 1-year licensing period

Existing licenses – reviewed a maximum 2-year licensing period (can be a shorter period based on past reviews)

Region 10 Quality Assurance	Traditional DHS Licensing
<p>Voice reviews completed Licensing period = a minimum of 2 individuals are reviewed, <i>or</i> 5% of the individuals served under that license are reviewed</p> <p>Paper compliance Review completed</p> <p>"QA Licensors" are in a 1 ½ hour radius of all programs, so they can and have visited regularly</p> <p>"QA Licensors" investigate licensing complaints when there are concerns</p> <p>"QA Licensors" work with the counties to do consulting work for providers having difficulty</p>	<p>Paper compliance review completed</p> <p>DHS licensors investigate licensing complaints when there are concerns</p>

The SAMPLER

Learning Portrait

Theme: The Sun (This individual loved being out in the sunshine)

On a large sheet of blue fun foam, I made a sun out of bright yellow fun foam. The body of the sun represented the person (with their name on it). I made large triangular shaped rays of the sun out of orange and light yellow fun foam. Each of the rays represented an important area of the person's life, and each ray had a piece of velcro on the back, so the person first saw the poster with just the body of the sun on it.

As each area was discussed the person was then given the corresponding ray to affix to the poster board around the body of the sun until all the rays were around the sun. The orange rays represented areas that were going well and the light yellow represented areas that needed improvement to shine brighter.

The whole sun was on a blue background representing blue sky above green fun foam grass along the bottom of the poster. I attached a fun foam handle at the top for carrying.

By: Kerri Vagness, ABC, Rochester MN
Contact Kerri at: (507) 535-7127 or kerriv@abcinc.org

Note:

When doing learning portraits, QAT's are invited to check out the supplies in the QA office and are welcome to use anything we have in stock.

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