



# QAT

## QuArTerly

In the Spot Light

Getting to Know a QAT

**Hi, I am Donna Garratt,**

I have been a QAT from the very beginning of Region 10 Quality Assurance and VOICE reviews. My interest in Quality Assurance and VOICE reviews is because of my son, Ryan. Ryan is 22, has autism, and lives at home with me. When I was on the QA

Commission and we were developing the VOICE review process. One of my concerns was how we would interview a person that did not use words to speak. My son uses few words and I could not imagine interviewing him. Through the numerous reviews over the years I learned that this was not only possible, but very effective. You can listen to someone that does not use words; communication takes on many forms.

Over the years I have grown as a parent because of the VOICE reviews I have done. I have become more conscious of giving Ryan choices in his life and allowing him to guide support services he receives. I have learned that willingness and creativity make anything possible.



**Donna and Ryan Garratt**

# The SAMPLER

## Learning Portrait

**Theme:** Newspaper

We chose this because the local paper was very important to the individual. His parents used to own the paper and he helped his mom deliver the papers. His still uses the newspaper to keep up on the community and what's going on with his friends.

### Directions and Materials:

We used one sheet of 11"x17" paper folded to 8 1/5" x 11" with pages 1 and 6 on one side and pages 2 and 5 on the other. A single 8 1/2" x 11" sheet was inserted as pages 3 & 4 into the folded piece. We used pictures of his staff, home, parents home and his work sites. We included special 'ads' that related to his famous sweet tooth along with a coupon and calendar page.

We used a buff colored paper (we couldn't get newsprint) for the paper and glossy paper for the coupon page. We had it printed in color to make it 'real' and 'attractive'. There is a color copier in the QA office to use for learning portraits.

### Contact Information:

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**Note:**  
When completing 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.

### COUPON PAGE

<p>COUPON</p> <p>This coupon entitles the bearer to one free sticker.</p> <p>Additional requirements: He must have been helpful at home on the day he requests the sticker.</p>	<p>COUPON</p> <p>Good for one free candy bar at "Kwik Trip"</p> <p>Must be redeemed by home staff</p>
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## Quips and Quotes From the QA Manager

### Learning portraits

We have had some wonderful learning portraits! Just a few reminders when creating your Learning portrait:

- Learning portraits are meant to be a visual representation of who the person is. Make sure you focus on that with the portrait not looking like a "gift".
- Learning portraits need to explain ALL findings (positive and not so positive) in the VOICE workbook. Make sure you pick a learning portrait that captures all the important aspects and providers as well as the Learning summary. By the time you finish that learning portrait you should have covered all the information that is in the workbook so there are no surprises when the quality circle reads the workbook at a later time.
- Make sure the learning portrait is based on the person and not what your hobbies are as a QAT.
- There is a maximum dollar limit of \$20. If you have the perfect idea and know it will be over that amount, please talk to me. We need to explore some ways we can use the idea and keep the cost down as much as we can. There are a couple reasons we have this limit.
  - Budgeting purposes
  - Consistency to other portraits - We want to make sure they don't cause conflicts between housemates. For instance, one person's portrait is a basket with all kinds of goodies that cost \$35 and the housemate's is poster collage that cost \$5.

There are times I may approve a cost higher than \$20 depending on the person's situation, the appropriateness/fit of the idea to the person, etc.

*Thanks for all your creative ideas! Remember to take pictures for the newsletter and for us to share with others.*

*LeAnn Bieber  
Quality Assurance Manager*

## Director Dan's Notations:

### 2007 Legislative Session:

As you may have guessed, we have been very busy these last months at the Capital. Every other year, the state sets its new budget for the next two year cycle. So we have been making sure that we are not overlooked and have secure funding for the next two years. This session has been different than those in the past due to the large number of newly elected legislators and the retirement of our main authors in both the House (Bradley) and the Senate (Kiscaden). Luckily, we have the support of a wonderful Legislative Committee of stakeholders that have helped inform the new legislators of who we are, why we are important and why should we continue. We were also able to secure very strong authors in Senator Ann Lynch Rep and Tina Liebling. Their efforts have enabled our bills to be brought to the appropriate committees, which we passed through quite easily. Currently we are in both the House and Senate versions of the Omnibus Bills. During the last week of April, they will work to make these two different bills one. We are fortunate in that we are the same in each version and so there should not be any changes as the final bill is put together. This is very different from past years where our bill made it through the House but not the Senate.

Our Bill asks for a few things besides continued funding for the next years. We have asked to broaden the people that can request **VOICE** Reviews. Currently it is only people with developmental disabilities. We want that changed to include all people with disabilities and aging population. We are also seeking to extend the sunset date of our Commission to June 30, 2014 (it is currently June 30, 2009.)

Besides our bill, there is also another statewide bill centered on quality assurance that is in the Omnibus Bills for the House and Senate. This legislation, framed by Arc MN and the Disability Law Center, is based on the work of a statewide QA Panel that we supported and served on. If interested, you can see the final QA Panel report by visiting [qapanel.com](http://qapanel.com). This legislation seeks to form a statewide stakeholder advisory panel for Department of Human Services, develop and implement a statewide consumer satisfaction survey, and develop means towards improving the state's VA complaint intake and investigation processes. Although the two versions are the same there is a small difference in funding. We are hoping that this passes and we can continue take steps for state wide improvement in our quality assurance system.

### Region 10 Quality Assurance Commission

QA and **VOICE** relies on the direction, feedback, and accountability that our Commission provides. If you have never had the opportunity to see how so many vastly different people can work together – now is your chance! June is the month that second term members leave and we work to replace them with new members. We make sure that our Commission has a balance between the stakeholders of People with Disabilities, Community Advocates, Provider Professionals, County Professionals and one member from DHS. These stakeholders are also split up throughout our 5 different Counties. If you are interested or know anyone that may be, please contact the Nominating Committee Chair, Marge Dent. You can reach her at (507) 289-7222 ext. 20 or [mdent@hiawathahomes.com](mailto:mdent@hiawathahomes.com)

Dan Zimmer  
Director

## Most Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What is the MN Region 10 Stakeholder group, are they elected or how does a person get involved?

The Region 10 Stakeholders are a group of people who volunteer their time. They meet on a quarterly basis and work to improve the support system for persons with developmental disabilities. Stakeholders are people who receive support services, family members, conservators, advocates, interested citizens, support providers, county representatives and state representatives. There is NO election process. Anyone who wants to attend the Stakeholder meetings is welcome to attend. The Stakeholders are also currently looking at inequities among different services provided to persons with disabilities and are working with others to address this. If you would like more information on the Stakeholder Meetings, you can contact Arc SE Minnesota at 1-888-732-8520.

### 2. What is the MN Region 10 Quality Assurance?

The Quality Assurance for persons with developmental disabilities is:

- A way to assess the quality of life (are people having good experiences and are people happy).
- A way to assess and monitor the quality of support (are support providers giving people the kind of support they need based on what is important to each individual).
- An alternative licensing system that makes licensing recommendations to the State of Minnesota.

### 3. What does the MN Region 10 Quality Assurance do?

The Quality Assurance:

- Promotes and encourages quality improvement in the support services to persons with developmental disabilities.
- Encourages and challenges the whole system of supports to look at individual choices and needs and provide supports based on each individual's choices and needs.
- Uses VOICE (Value of Individual Choices and Experiences) a person-driven process developed by the Stakeholders to assess the person's overall experiences and to assess provider contributions. Trained review team members (people from Region 10 Minnesota: persons receiving support, family members, advocates, providers, and case managers) interview persons receiving support services and talk to family, friends, support providers and case managers.

#### **4. Why is the Quality Assurance important to me?**

- If you are a person receiving support services, you might be selected to have a VOICE interview. Having a VOICE interview is a way by which you and the people that support you (your quality circle) can review what is important to you and if the support provided to you is what you want and need in your life. You are given an opportunity to get your voice heard. Through interviews the review team is able to identify what is going good for you and what you might want changed based on what is important to you.
- Based on findings from your VOICE review, Action Plans may need to be developed. You and your quality circle will work together to identify the action you and/or you and your family want to better support you reflecting your choices and needs.
- You can request a review to be done. If you are a person receiving support services through a participating county, (Fillmore, Houston, Mower, Olmsted and Winona) you can call the Quality Assurance Manager and request a review be done.
- If you are a family member, advocate, conservator, support provider or a case manager, a VOICE review is a good way to assess if the quality circle is supporting the person as the person wishes. It is a way to get your voice heard as to what is working well and what needs to be improved in order to better support the person.

#### **5. Who is the MN Region 10 QA Commission responsible to?**

The Region 10 Quality Assurance Commission is responsible to the Minnesota State Legislature and the Region 10 Stakeholders –including- persons receiving support services, family members, conservators, advocates, support providers, county and state representatives.

#### **6. How can the MN Region 10 Quality Assurance do licensing?**

*Through the Minnesota Legislature, the QA Commission has been authorized to develop and implement an alternative licensing system. Using VOICE, the Region 10 QA Standards, and the protective standards, the participating counties have an agreement with the state to carry out licensing functions. The counties that are participating have hired a Quality Assurance Manager and an Assistant QA Manager to coordinate the reviews and to staff a county review council. The county Quality Assurance Review Council (QARC) is made up of Stakeholders from Region 10 Minnesota. The QARC makes licensing recommendations to the county and the county makes a recommendation to the State of Minnesota.*

#### **7. How are people selected for VOICE reviews?**

There are currently 5 out of 11 counties in Region 10 Minnesota that are participating in the Quality Assurance. If you are a person receiving case management services from one of these counties and/or receive support services through a licensed support provider, your name could be selected for a review. The QA Manager randomly selects names of people receiving support services.

**8. How many people are selected for VOICE reviews?**

The Minnesota State Legislation mandates that a minimum of 2 people or 5% of persons being supported through a licensed program be interviewed. Persons receiving support can request to participate in a **VOICE** review.

**9. How often do the paper reviews take place?**

A “paper review” is a review of the protective standards and the Region 10 Quality Assurance Standards. A paper review is completed when a new program is licensed, 12months after an initial license is issued and then at least once every 24 months after that.

**10. How many counties are involved? How does a county get to participate? How does that work?**

As of July 1, 2001 there are five out of eleven counties in Region 10 Minnesota participating in the Region 10 Quality Assurance, which includes the alternative licensing system. Each year, counties in Region 10 are invited to participate. If a county chooses to participate, the County Director notifies the QA Commission. A county or group of counties that chooses to participate, are responsible for hiring a county QA Manager and coordinating a county Quality Assurance Review Council (QARC). The counties are given grant money from the QA Commission to support its participation. Persons receiving support services, family members, support providers and county staff can encourage county participation. The county board makes the final decision for participation in the Region 10 QA. A group of counties can choose to pool their grant money and hire staff to carry out the licensing responsibilities with the QARC.

**11. How does the MN Region Quality Assurance keep the level of volunteerism going?**

The QA was developed by the Region 10 Stakeholders. There is a commitment by the Stakeholders to improve the level of support to persons. The VOICE review process is a “person-driven” process, meaning it is based on what the person wants and needs. People believe in this process and in the Region 10 System that has been developed. In order for the Quality Assurance and alternative licensing system to work, Region 10 Stakeholders have made a commitment to give of their time. Persons receiving support, family members, advocates, providers and county staff have given of their time to go through training to become a trained quality assurance team member. As people are involved in the review process, it is a learning experience for all. Support providers and counties give in-kind contributions of staff’s time because this process can make a difference in a person’s life, it encourages communication and coordination, and it is a good learning experience for the staff that get involved. Persons receiving support, family members, advocates and other community members feel this process gives people a louder voice and is making a difference. Stipends are given to people who are not paid through an agency for their time to complete a VOICE review.

## 12. How is Region 10 Quality Assurance different from the traditional system?

1. In a traditional licensing format, people and families receiving support are not always participants in the process; the focus is on minimum standards and external requirements. Through the Region 10 Quality Assurance, licensing of support providers is based on findings from individual VOICE reviews. Individuals and families receiving support are given a voice and are key players in the process; indeed, they drive the process. The Quality Assurance enhances the quality of life for people and encourages continuous improvement in the support system.
2. Traditional systems do not include quality evaluation of county case management services. This alternative approach evaluates all elements of the support system, including improvement recommendations to county, state and federal agencies.

Through this comprehensive approach, the Region 10 Quality Assurance System combines three types of quality review processes, which are traditionally separated:

- quality assurance to evaluate whether individuals are receiving appropriate supports and services;
- quality improvement to assist specific providers, groups of providers, and the system as a whole to help individuals achieve better life outcomes; and
- licensing of programs that use public funds to support individuals with developmental disabilities.

Combining these efforts reduces redundancy in regulations and shifts the system into a process of continuous feedback and improvement. The process encourages providers to develop new and more effective means of support while assuring that basic safety and welfare are protected. It also provides a comprehensive and current overview on how well the system is working.

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