

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
OFFICE OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
STATE LEVEL CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT (CQI) ANNUAL REPORT
JULY 2007-JUNE 2008

CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT (CQI):

The Office of Community Services (OCS) utilizes an agency-wide continuous quality improvement (CQI) process to ensure that services are being provided at a level that meets best practice standards, national accreditation standards and promotes quality outcomes for children and families of the State.

CQI is a philosophy and a process that allows the OCS to look at activities, performance measures and outcomes and create plans for improvement. The concept involves small continuous steps toward a goal. All levels of staff and community stakeholders are involved in the evaluation of the effectiveness of services provided, activities within OCS, and the organization as a whole. The involvement of staff and community stakeholders is vital to the success of the CQI process.

CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT (CQI) TEAM MEETINGS

Each region and state office have a CQI team. All CQI teams/committees meet as needed or at least once per quarter to review agenda items and program improvement plans. The State office CQI Team meets bi-monthly. Teams ensure that the agency achieves/maintains best practice standards and accreditation standards. Various CQI processes such as Peer Case Review (PCR) and Measurement of Consumer Satisfaction/Feedback Mechanisms help to identify issues which need the attention of other committees; therefore, the entire committee structure is essential to the CQI process.

COMPONENTS OF THE CQI PROCESS

1) **PEER CASE REVIEW (PCR)**- Peer Case Review is a three tiered process designed to improve the quality of the OCS service delivery system. The Peer Case Review process utilizes staff from all levels and all program areas, and provides the agency with a viable method for evaluating and improving service delivery. The Peer Case Review process does not replace supervisory case reviews, but is a complimentary process. It allows for objective, child welfare peers to focus on the quality of services provided to clients through review of documentation of those services found in the case record, through worker interviews and stakeholder focus groups. The information obtained from the review process is used by CQI teams and management to identify and initiate process, program, and outcome improvement plans.

- **Tier 1:** A traditional quality assurance (QA) review of Family Service (FS), Foster Care (FC) and Adoption (AD) cases, and a review of Child Protection Investigation (CPI) cases through A Comprehensive Enterprise Social Services System (ACCESS), which is the agency's Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS). This review focuses on compliance with policy requirements in each program. This

quantitative and process oriented review occurs on a monthly basis. The agency also conducts ad hoc reviews to address specific issues impacting service delivery.

- **Tier 2:** Quarterly case record reviews which include a review of cases in all areas of service delivery. Reviewers use the Federal Child and Family Services instrument to review all cases selected for review. Worker interviews are also conducted in this part of the process. The review focuses on quality of practice related to child and family outcomes of safety, permanency and well-being.
- **Tier 3:** This process involves focus groups to help identify systemic factors which may affect service delivery. Regions have the option of conducting two focus groups, one with clients and one with providers and community partners.

TIER 1

In order to meet best practice standards, the agency continued to do Quality Assurance (QA) reviews and ad hoc reviews. The ad hoc reviews are as follows:

- **Young Adult Program (YAP):** 100% of YAP cases in all regions were reviewed from May-July 2006. The purpose of the review was to consider adherence to policy and appropriate use of this state funded program to meet the needs of youth, as well as consideration of changes which may be needed to the program to more adequately promote independence for youth leaving the foster care system. The results indicated that many youth who were admitted to the program did not meet the agency criteria for the program. The information is being used to revamp services to teens, aging out youth and young adults served by the agency. The agency is making exceptions to policy so that all youth are eligible for YAP. Youth can opt not to participate, but, can be accepted before the age of twenty-one. Requests for Proposals (RFP) were completed for Independent Living Providers so youth independent living skills classes can provide more experiences for youth. We continue to receive technical assistance from the NRC but have completed all recommendations from the initial report.
- **Independent Living Services:** A review of independent living services was conducted July-September 2006. The purpose of the review was to gain a more complete perspective on how the agency prepares youth for independence and to identify areas needing enhancement. From the review, a Request for Proposal (RFP) for independent living services was initiated and 19 proposals were received. Nine providers were awarded contracts. An area needing enhancement was identified as more experiential teaching with youth.
- **Caseworker Visit Reviews:** In January 2008, the agency conducted a review of 357 foster care cases focusing on case worker visits. The purpose of the review was to begin meeting the 90 percent goal of children in foster care being visited by their caseworkers monthly with a majority of the visits occurring in the residence of the child by October 1, 2011. Of the 357 children whose cases were reviewed, 195 (55%) were visited each and every month. Of the 195 that were visited each and every month, 82% were visited in the home. The review period for FFY 2008 will be October 1, 2007 through September 30, 2008.

TIER 2 & 3:

- Jefferson Region PCR-October 2007; Focus group held with Foster Parents
- Covington Region PCR -November 2007; Focus group held with biological parents
- Baton Rouge Region PCR-February 2008; Focus group held with legal system
- Orleans Region PCR-July 2008; Focus group held with

During the 2006-2007 SFY, the PCR subcommittee worked to redefine and refine the review process by ensuring that both QA and PCR processes measure the new recovery/reform efforts and ensure that the data obtained is needed and of use to staff as we make decisions to inform practice and to ensure that the QA process and the PCR process are as seamless as possible.

A Regional Assessment Report (RAR) is developed for regions following the PCR. This report includes various forms of data as well as the identification of trends in service delivery. The data reports are intended to support regional managers/staff in interpreting practice and outcome processes which will then contribute to action plans focused on program improvement. This is a new approach in the use of data for the PCR process.

2) PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLANS (PIP)/ACTION PLANS

On June 19, 2006, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) approved a renegotiated PIP that reflected the State's new priorities of recovery and reform and allowed an additional year for PIP completion. The agency completed all items in the PIP in the agreed upon time frame and the final PIP quarterly report was submitted on October 23, 2007. The Children's Bureau staff concluded that Louisiana had successfully completed its PIP. Specifically, during the PIP period, OCS achieved national data standards regarding increased timely reunification of children with their parents or timely adoption, increased stability of foster care placements, and decreased repeat maltreatment and maltreatment while in foster care. Additionally, regions are asked to develop a program improvement plans to address findings in Regional Assessment Reports.

3) MEASUREMENT OF CONSUMER SATISFACTION/FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

The agency administers a survey which is offered to all visitors at the state, regional and parish office level. This survey addresses items such as office hours, timeliness of appointments, professionalism of staff, knowledge of how to file a complaint, etc. All offices continue to administer customer satisfaction surveys/inventories. The data gathered from these surveys continues to assist the agency in improving our service delivery process and our service environment as well as meeting the COA standards. Customer satisfaction survey data has been consistently positive on all items over the last four years due to the agency monitoring these issues. Statewide reports are posted on the DSS website at www.dss.state.la.us.

4) USE OF DATA/OUTCOMES MEASUREMENT

Several sources of data are reviewed in the CQI committees. Regional assessment reports, generated around a region's peer case review, contain PCR data, QA data, staff turnover data and demographic data and identify regional trends in service delivery. These reports are reviewed in regional CQI committee meetings to measure practice and improvement.

Reports generated from measures of consumer satisfaction provide both statewide and regional data for use by CQI teams. Staff forward their regional report to state office where a statewide report is generated using all regional and state office data. These reports help CQI teams to identify patterns and trends in service delivery and the organization. Once patterns and trends are identified CQI teams develop and implement action plans to reduce barriers to customer satisfaction. They are also helpful for pinpointing areas of the State where there may be particular needs or issues. The reports are sent to staff statewide and are also made available to consumers in regional offices via the intranet.

Staff Turnover data has been reviewed extensively in the state level CQI committee and the Staff Turnover and Retention Workgroup (STAR). This workgroup was developed in December 2007 due to concern about the increased turnover and a CQI referral received from the community and consumer stakeholder committee regarding turnover in the agency. The data revealed that turnover for direct service staff has steadily increased since 2004 which strongly impacts the agency's ability to provide services to families and children. This group addressed issues such as pay, caseload/workload size, support and guidance and training/workforce development. The STAR committee will no longer meet as a group but the efforts of the committee will continue in the following areas:

- Turnover statistics and reports will continue to be reviewed/addressed though the state level CQI committee
- The state office training unit will continue to work on training and workforce development
- Address workload issues for direct service staff and initially focusing on Foster Care and clerical
- Ongoing issues will continue to be addressed with the management team.

OCS measures outcomes to ensure quality services are delivered to the children and families served by the agency. While many of the outcome measures are established by the federal government, the Governor, the Louisiana State Legislature and the Department of Social Services, OCS, also sets goals and objectives to meet specific needs of children and families in Louisiana. In an effort to ensure consistency, reduce duplication and focus on safety, permanency, and well-being, the agency developed its own outcomes based on the required federal outcome measures. The agency's outcome measures are tracked in the Budget Performance Indicators as well as the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP), the Annual Progress and Service Report (APSR) and the agency's program improvement plan. The CFSP and APSR are the basis for long-term and short term plans.

LEADING INNOVATIONS FOR FAMILY TRANSFORMATION AND SAFETY (LIFTS)

“Louisiana LIFTS” is an ongoing initiative that seeks to achieve further improvements to the child welfare system for children and families served. Through it, OCS seeks to improve case intake processes, improve family assessments and case planning, improve community-based services, improve foster and adoptive parent recruitment, reduce the number of children placed in residential treatment, and better support young people that are emancipated out of foster care into adult life. These initiatives will help to strengthen practice and focus on four core elements:

safety, risk, assessment of family functioning and case planning. Additionally, the initiatives serve to further the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) goals related to safety, permanency, and well-being in the state.

CQI Referrals

There are instances when other committees or individuals within the organization refer standards or unresolved issues to regional CQI teams and the state level CQI team (ex. needed changes in laws/state statutes; regions identify needed policy changes).

Examples of CQI referrals received that impact stakeholders include:

- ❖ **Disproportionality in Foster Care** – Referral suggests that the Louisiana child welfare system is marked by racial disparities and that African-American, and undoubtedly American Indian and Latin American children are over-represented in the foster care population. To address this issue, the agency continues to work with the National Resource Centers to work through the agency’s training technical assistance plan that includes long and short term goals and the agency’s major reform initiatives. **Referral Source: State Level Stakeholder Committee –ONGOING**
- ❖ **Foster Parent Recruitment** –This referral was sent to program for consideration in requiring all state agencies to post information on becoming a foster and or adoptive parent. This referral was closed due to massive media campaign being undertaken as part of massive reform efforts at the time of the referral. **Referral Source-Covington Region-CLOSED 10/16/07.**
- ❖ **Visitor Parking:** This referral suggested that the parking garage is difficult for visitors to state office to locate and it is difficult for people who are not familiar with the garage to locate their vehicles when they return to the garage. This referral was closed after the opening of the new visitor parking garage. The location of the garage was provided as well as instructions on validating parking tickets. **Referral Source: Consumer/Community Stakeholder Committee. CLOSED 4/29/08**

New Direction for CQI:

The Council on Accreditation has issued their 8th edition standards and all regions were provided with an overview of these standards and the CQI process between January 2008 and March 2008. The agency is making great strides in the development of the self study for re-accreditation as well as the preparation for on-site reviews. The state office site visit is scheduled for February 9-13, 2009.

A CQI brochure is attached for your review. The brochure is distributed to new staff and community stakeholders statewide.

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June 24, 2008

The agency would like to recognize the following regions for demonstrating excellence and commitment to a continuous quality improvement process and providing quality services to children and families of Louisiana:

CQI TEAM OF THE YEAR

LAFAYETTE REGIONAL CQI TEAM



Featured in the photograph: Linda Boudreaux, Ruth Richard, Melissa Thompson, Kenneth Soileau, Lucinda Latour, Liz Belaire, Katherine Prejean, Laura Zaunbrecher, Kelly Anderson, Patricia Hebert, Sherry Firmin, Marilyn Smith and Melissa Espree.

Members of the CQI Team for 2007-2008: Liz Belaire, Laurel Freeman, Betty Verret, Leslie Vidrine, Susan Allbritton, Sherry Firmin, Jennifer Robertson, Guy Sylvester, Patricia Mitchell, Ruth Richard, Maegan Carboni, Linda Boudreaux, Karen Matthews and Melissa Thompson.

Additionally, the Covington Regional and the Shreveport Regional CQI Teams have been recognized as follows:

COVINGTON REGIONAL CQI TEAM-2nd Place

SHREVEPORT REGIONAL CQI TEAM-3rd Place

Criteria for the award is based on the following: exceptional work in conducting meetings on a regular basis and having all levels of staff represented, as well as stakeholder involvement; use of communication of information and data to inform practice and decision making and a clearly defined feedback loop to provide information to all staff and stakeholders; unique and innovative efforts to recognize best practice and encourage staff and community participation; and most importantly, the CQI process has been used to improve overall practice.