



## COA Site Visit Update By Michael Cash



CQ EYE

May/June 2009

### Inside this issue:

COA Site Visit Update	1
Student Involvement With CQI At Juvenile Justice GroupHomes	2
Program Improvement Plan For CFSR	3
Assessment Team CQI Success Story	4
COA Site Visit Update (Cont.)	5
Just For Fun CQI Word Find	6

After years of preparation (case reviews, facility inspections, mock COA reviews, etc.), COA site visits are finally occurring and our agency is doing extremely well. The COA site visits are conducted by COA peers from all over North America who are considered experts in regards to the COA standards. The COA peers who have participated in the reviews come from agencies in Maryland, Illinois, New York, Ohio, Florida, Texas, Michigan, Kentucky and British Columbia, Canada. At the time this publication was released, Central Office and three regions (Northeast, Northwest, and Southwest) have received written notification from COA that they are in compliance with COA standards. Three regions (Upper Cumberland, Southeast and Davidson) have completed the site visits and fully expect to receive written notice of their compliance with COA standards in the near future.

The COA site visits

started on November 3, 2008 when the COA peers arrived in Nashville to review Central Office. This review was conducted by three COA peers. The peers were from agencies in Illinois, Maryland and Ohio. The peers were extremely impressed with what they saw during the Central Office review. They highlighted the agency leadership and continuous quality improvement as areas of strength. On December 9, 2008, Central Office received written notification of compliance with COA standards.

After the Central Office review, the COA peers moved on to Northeast Region. This site visit began on January 12, 2009. The review was conducted by three COA peers. The peers were from COA management in New York and agencies in Illinois. Northeast Region received written notification on March 16, 2009 that the region is in compliance with COA standards. Some of the



CREDIBILITY • INTEGRITY • ACHIEVEMENT

strengths identified during this review were:

- Child and family teams
- Continuous quality improvement
- Case load reduction
- Youth involvement in CQI
- Commitment of staff to the families they serve
- Quality of juvenile justice group home facilities

The next region that the peers reviewed was Northwest Region. This site visit began February 9, 2009. The team was comprised of COA peers from Illinois and British Columbia, Canada. Some of the strengths identified during this review were:

(Continued on Page 5)





Johnson City Observation and Assessment Center



Johnson City Boys Group Home

## Student Involvement In CQI At The Juvenile Justice Group Homes

*By Joel Player and Becky Phelps*

Improving the quality of life for our youth in DCS group homes has always been our priority so it is only a natural progression to include them in the decision making process for events that effect their day to day lives.

In the past this was accomplished by conducting house meetings between the youth and staff. This process gave the youth a voice but did not encourage or empower them to come up with possible solutions to the problems that they raised. Instead, these meetings often turned into "gripe sessions" and left the youth dependent upon decisions made by staff members without the youth's input.

Now that has all changed. The youth have now formed their own CQI teams and have embraced the process. By including the youth in the CQI process through allowing them to have their own teams, they can think creatively and learn to process problems and come up with realistic solutions, within realistic parameters, on their own. This has produced ownership in the outcomes while providing the youth with practice in social interactions and learning to work together for the common good. The youth present their resolutions to the front line staff CQI teams (Level 1) for review and discussion for possible implementation. A member of the youth CQI team is encouraged to attend the staff CQI meeting to present their results so the feedback loop can be completed. The youth CQI teams have the same makeup and structure as all other CQI teams with their own facilitators and scribes. Minutes are kept and stored with other group home CQI minutes. The

student teams are considered to be level 1 CQI teams in the group home's four level CQI system.

One of the underlying assumptions of CQI is that the problem solving process can involve multiple teams and different members. During our recent COA audits, the peer reviewers praised our CQI process, including the involvement of the youth, for being a truly upwardly mobile system that begins at ground level problem solving. On more than one occasion, when youth have been debating a problematic issue in the group home one of them has been heard to say, "Let's CQI this." The COA reviewers have been impressed with group home facilities and with the degree to which the students placed at these facilities are engaged in the CQI process. Clearly this process has begun to institute a cultural change within the structure of the group homes that has created positive involvement of the youth in learning to problem solve and exercise control of their own situations.

It is evident that the students have incorporated the CQI process into their daily lives and are setting a great example for agency staff. Since the student CQI teams were formed in September 2008, they have used the CQI process to address areas such as recreational/physical activities, disciplinary actions, community service work, anger management, AA/NA counseling, chores, etc. One team even asked staff to be more stringent with enforcement of facility rules.

## Program Improvement Plan For CFSR

### *By Mary Jane Peck*

Tennessee is making plans for improvement. As part of the federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR), which included a compilation of state child welfare data, statewide assessment information, individual case file reviews, and interviews with key child welfare stakeholders, DCS is developing a Program Improvement Plan (PIP). This plan will include strategies for addressing areas needing improvement identified in the review and will be implemented over a two year period.

In November, federal consultants facilitated a brainstorming session with DCS staff and external stakeholders. Using the preliminary results as a basis for discussion, participants identified four areas of focus for the Program Improvement Plan (PIP). Workgroups were formed for each identified area and members set the following priorities:

#### **Leadership and Management**

The Leadership and Management group has developed strategies related to setting department priorities, assisting supervisors and managers demonstrate best practice, providing relevant staff development opportunities, clarifying roles for Central Office and regional staff, helping managers provide consistent communication and support to staff. This group is proposing to conduct a workforce analysis and develop a plan to recruitment, training, professional development, and performance management.

#### **Court**

The Court group will focus on helping strengthen and improve the relationship between DCS and the judicial system in order to ensure community and child safety through accurate and timely case determinations and provide timely permanency for children. Strategies will be developed to strengthen court and agency administrative processes, including improving the quality of permanency hearings and reducing continuances and delays. Ensuring quality legal representation for children and parents will also be a key strategy of this group.

#### **Practice and Assessment**

The Practice Workgroup has been charged with better aligning and deepening the implementation of strategies designed to improve the Department's measures of quality practice. These measures relate to the components of the practice wheel (engaging, teaming, assessing, planning, implementing, tracking and adjusting). Initial strategies have been developed to improve the teaming when children first come to the attention of the Department, including implementation of a QSR process for non-custodial cases. Ensuring that quality services are available to families at risk of entering state custody as well as families who have been reunified is another goal of this group. Providing more support for Resource Linkage staff and Community Advisory Boards will assist in identify-

ing and utilizing supports and services within the community.

#### **Data and Monitoring**

The goal of the Data and Monitoring workgroup is to develop strategies to improve DCS staff understanding and utilization of data to improve outcomes as well as streamlining departmental monitoring processes. This group will focus on development of the Provider Scorecard, Integrated Monitoring, and CQI as tools to achieve this goal. The Provider Scorecard will enable the Department to gather the most important data related to provider performance in one place. This will allow the Department to give feedback and assist providers in identifying strengths and challenges to performance. Integrated Monitoring is an attempt to streamline monitoring processes within the Department and reduce redundancies to make provider monitoring more meaningful and efficient. CQI will be used to enhance agency use of data and quality assurance efforts through communicating findings, providing Technical Assistance to CQI teams on using data to drive decision-making and using data camps to connect QSR and other agency data reports.

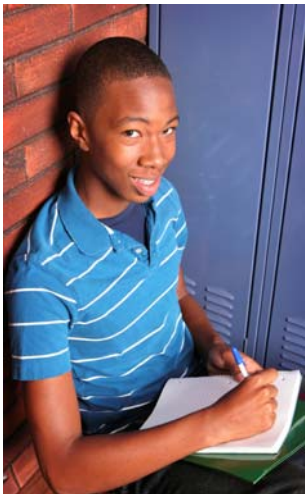
The four work groups are currently working to refine strategies and action steps and develop measurable benchmarks for achieving progress. A draft of the PIP will be submitted to the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) on June 1.

## Assessment CQI Team Success Story

*By Beth Duke*



*“All  
assessment is  
a perpetual  
work in  
progress”  
Linda Suske*



On October 24, 2007, a new CQI team was developed to focus on the use of DCS assessment tools and on helping staff better utilize the tools to ensure that the needs of children and families are met. The team is called the Assessment CQI Team.

Each month, this group of dedicated individuals meets to address statewide concerns about the assessment tools and how to make the tools work better for everyone. Team members come from every region, every program area, and Central Office. They provide input as a group and come up with easy-to-use steps to help staff use assessments in their daily practice. When the group meets, it's not just a meeting... it's a time to share stories, deal with issues, and come up with the best solution for everyone in a very open atmosphere.

The team is spearheaded by Dr. Linda Fenderson-Doss. Dr. Fenderson-Doss provides monthly status reports for all tracked data components and helps to achieve our many action steps each month. She is always prepared. The group is

facilitated by Lawanda Christmon, who makes sure that everybody stays on task and that the group moves the discussions along within time frames. The Scribe, Mary Beth Duke, records the minutes and shares them each month with the members and prepares the agenda. Each regional member has the responsibility of taking the information back to their Core Leadership Team and ensuring that it is filtered down to all staff.

What a great job the team has done since 2007! The group has ensured that regional training is available when needed, facilitated the implementation of a statewide shared drive for storing thousands of Family Functional Assessments, monitored the use of assessment tools, and performed quality reviews.

Next time you see the Assessment CQI Team members, tell them you appreciate all their hard work, dedication to the assessment process, and willingness to cultivate courses of action that support best practice and field staff.

The members of this team are: Ron Bailey, Lawanda Christmon, Christina Dotson, Rosie Skinner, Michael Leach, Linda Fenderson-Doss, Tonya Christensen, Christy Blazer, Renick Colson, Cortney Dugger, Caterina Heatwole, Tawnya Fogarty, Rosa Webb, David Hall, Pam Harr, Lucretia Sanders, Tina Williams, Teresa Benson, Diane Hurth, Robin Williams, Jana Dugger, Jean Mitchell, Mary Beth Duke, Cyndy Hagan, Jackie Moore and Cheryl McGuire.

Special guests who have participated in meetings during the past year are Marjahna Hart, Commissioner Viola Miller, Michael Cash, and Thomas Jones.



## COA Site Visit Update *(Continued)*

- Continuous quality improvement
- Supervisory notebooks
- Commitment and passion of the staff
- Risk prevention management
- Case file organization
- Community partnerships

The next region to be reviewed was Southwest Region. This site visit began on February 23, 2009. The team was comprised of COA peers from agencies in Illinois. Southwest Region received notification that the region is in compliance with COA standards on March 19, 2009. Some of the strengths identified during the review were:

- Community partners and stakeholders
- Case file organization.
- Confidentiality of case files and other information
- Excellent facilities and file rooms
- Staff dedication to and engagement with the families they serve
- Continuous quality improvement

On March 23, 2009, the COA peers arrived in

Upper Cumberland Region to complete the COA site visit. The team was comprised of COA peers from agencies in Michigan, Illinois and Florida. The review in Upper Cumberland went extremely well. The region fully expects to receive written notification of their compliance with COA standards in the near future. Some of the strengths identified in the region were:

- Family friendly lobbies and visitation rooms
- Juvenile justice staff's commitment to generational change
- Continuous quality improvement
- Risk prevention management
- Case file organization

The Southeast Region's COA site visit began April 6, 2009. The review team was comprised of COA peers from agencies in Texas, Illinois and Ohio. This review also went extremely well. Southeast Region also expects to receive written notification of their compliance with COA standards in the near future. Some of the strengths identified during the site visit were:

- Strong organizational leadership
- Child friendly offices
- CQI permeates the region
- Excellent organization of records
- Risk prevention management
- Case file organization

The Davidson County COA site visit began May 17, 2009. The team was comprised of COA peers from agencies in Kentucky, Florida and Illinois. The peers were very impressed with what they saw in Davidson County. The region expects to receive notice of compliance in the near future. Some of the strengths identified were:

- Gracious, committed, dedicated and interesting staff

- Obvious progress made toward meeting legal mandates
- Quality of regional facilities
- Continuous quality improvement
- Community partner engagement
- Quality of group home facilities

The remaining regional and Central Office COA site visit schedule is:

- Mid-Cumberland (6/15/09)
- South Central (7/20/09)
- Hamilton (8/24/09)
- Knox (8/31/09)
- East (9/14/09)
- Smoky Mountain (9/28/09)
- Shelby (10/5/09)
- Central Office second review (10/26/09)



DEPARTMENT OF  
CHILDREN'S SERVICES

*Putting the Pieces  
Together*

436 Sixth Avenue North  
Ninth Floor  
Nashville, TN 37243-1290  
Michael Cash (615) 532-8343

*A PUBLICATION OF THE  
OFFICE OF PERFORMANCE  
AND QUALITY  
IMPROVEMENT.*



JUST FOR FUN .....  
CQI WORD FIND

r c o m m i t m e n t v m o s p t  
e m t p l a n n i n g s e e n f t  
i k t t c f e o e i w g c o a t e  
t c n s d n m a y m m i i c g d p  
t n e m s s e s s a t t t e e p r  
t v m s a t g i s t a s s s g t o  
s r e n t r a p y t i n u m m o c  
e s g o e c n t n e f c j j p t e  
c i a s n y a e e c o t e o d r d  
e n g e e c m y a f a r l s i a u  
a t n n u e k e y n n i i a v c r  
e e e e l n s l i u c e n s e k e  
d g n p o a i g n i m a e t r i s  
o r m j f m r i e p m g v m s n n  
c i v e a r a s m e d v u k i g e  
r t t f s e m p o w e r j n t k t  
f y e q r p d l n j e f t e y e e

Teaming

Adjustment

Planning

Diversity

Safety

RiskManagement

Engagement

Assessment

Integrity

FamilyFocused

Permanency

Policies

Tracking

Implementation

Commitment

CommunityPartners

Empower

Procedures