Evaluation and review of the Region 10 quality assurance model

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The VOICE approach (Value Of Individual Choices and Experiences)

VOICE is a person-centered approach to monitoring service quality. Using the VOICE process, program licensing reviews of organizations are based on the outcomes achieved by people as assisted by the supports they are provided instead of the program’s conformity with a set of standardized rules and regulations. The VOICE system —

- Measures quality one person at a time according to individually-referenced standards.
- Uses information gathered directly from the consumer and those with firsthand knowledge about and interest in the quality of services the consumer receives.
- Uses information gathered in face-to-face interviews, not paperwork reviews or detached observations of consumers and program staff.
- Is designed for multiple intended uses and multiple intended users
- Evaluates all agencies supporting a single consumer at the same time.

Background

Beginning in 1995, a group of community stakeholders in Southeast Minnesota began to explore community initiatives to improve services. One of these initiatives received Legislative authority and funding to plan, design, and implement a new outcome-based quality assurance system for community services. This plan created and granted the Region 10 Quality Assurance Commission the authority to serve as the regional quality assurance and licensing entity for Region 10 counties (11 counties in the southeastern corner of Minnesota) wishing to implement a program of outcome-based quality assessment.

The review process

VOICE reviews are completed by community volunteers. These volunteers spend time with the consumer, family members and friends, and representatives from each agency who provide support to the consumer. In each of the eight life areas, the reviewers first learn what is most important to the consumers’ happiness and well-being.
sources of this validity include the reviewers, the depth of the interview process, and the use of multiple people to provide information including those who know the person best.

- The biggest perceived threat to the validity of VOICE reviews is concern that different Quality Assurance Teams (QATs) will come to different conclusions given the same information.

- In addition to monitoring service outcomes, VOICE facilitates quality improvement discussions and interventions. The reviews focus on the person, not the paper.

- VOICE results are useful to direct support professionals, county case managers, and families as well as to service providers and monitoring agencies.

- VOICE reviews have been the impetus for major changes in consumers’ lives, such as where they work or live. VOICE reviews have been less effective in encouraging changes in consumers’ day-to-day lives.

- VOICE requires a major time commitment from many people to serve as QAT members.

Addressing the HCBS quality framework

The Quality Framework holds states responsible for assessing the extent to which Medicaid Home- and Community-Based (“waiver”) Services are “participant-centered,” and achieve “participant outcomes and satisfaction.” Amidst the growing response to these national trends and federal government expectations, one of the most distinctive and nationally recognized has been the Region 10 Quality Assurance Commission (hereafter referred to as “The Commission”).

Additional information

Copies of the complete evaluation report can be downloaded from: http://rtc.umn.edu/. Look under publications in the residential supports section.

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