

M.A.D. Adventures

(Mainstream's Accreditation Dream)

How we do our work is as important as the work we do

Core Competencies

What makes people good at what they do? Knowledge and experience definitely play a role. Training and certifications certainly help. Still, even individuals with the same knowledge, level of experience and training will perform differently when given the same task. What makes one individual's performance passable and another's outstanding?

What makes the difference are often the little things; the softer skills that are not part of someone's resume or credentials. Empathy or insight affects how well someone can relate to others. Being organized and motivated has a tremendous effect on the quality of work done. Attitude, behaviour and individual characteristics such as these are called core competencies. They may be hard to measure but it turns out that they are just as important as what is on a resume.

The Hay Group is an organization that has been actively working to identify core competencies in various sectors. They are currently developing a list of core competencies for the developmental services sector as part of the Human Resources Strategy. They will be identifying core competencies for all staff levels, from entry-level to top executives.

The Hay Group describes

competency as any motive, attitude, skill, knowledge, behaviour or other characteristic that:

- is essential to perform the job, or
- differentiates solid from outstanding performance.

Once this list of competencies is developed, the hope is that competency-based designations will be developed for various positions. That means that those softer skills may play a more prominent role in the hiring process. Individuals considering a career in developmental services will be better able to determine if it is an appropriate choice for them. It also means that core competencies may become part of annual performance reviews and staff training.

It's an interesting and exciting idea and the research has already begun. It is expected that the core competencies for the developmental services sector will be identified by the end of 2009.

The highest reward for a person's toil is not what they get from it, but what they become by it.

John Ruskin

Action!

When we began the Gap Analysis back in March of this year, the biggest challenge was the unknown. There were so many questions. How will the gap work? How will we get through it? How hard will it be? Once we started the questions answered themselves and we learned that, as with most things, it's not that scary once you actually begin.

We are now at the beginning of the next phase and the feeling that comes with entering into uncharted territory has returned. How will we create an action plan? How do we keep track of everything that needs to happen? How hard is this going to be? As with most new ventures, it is both exciting and overwhelming at the same time.

Action! That's what this phase is all about. Taking the words that we wrote down during the gap and turning them into action. We don't have a system for keeping track of annual goal planning? Let's create one! We don't have one central location for emergency information? Let's make one!

Action doesn't necessarily mean more work. During this process, we might discover that we've been doing something

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Consistency

There are many side benefits that come with accreditation. One of the principle ones is consistency. When the quality and type of service offered by a program or an agency is consistent it means that it is reliable and constant even in the face of change. Expectations should be clear and processes structured to ensure that quality service is provided across the agency.

When Focus comes to review our agency, they will be looking for proof that the service provided is consistent both within and across programs. They call it the 649 Rule. Their question: if all Mainstream employees won the 649 and retired, would systems be in place to ensure that the new staff would be able to access the information they need to provide the same quality programs and support? Focus wants us to ask ourselves that question as we work our way through each of the accreditation standards.

If none of the current staff were left to provide training, orientation and mentoring, would new staff be able to find the information they needed? Would they understand how each program operates, how forms are used, how medications are administered or where the emergency information is kept? If the answer to any question is no, then an easy-to-follow system needs to be developed.

Consistency does not mean that every process or service needs to be identical across the agency. Every program at Mainstream is unique and it would not make sense for them to do everything the same way. What is important is that a consistent quality of service is maintained, both within programs and across the agency. Quality service is what Mainstream is all about. Consistency is the way to ensure that Mainstream continues to provide the highest level of service, even if we all win the 649 tomorrow!

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for years that we don't really need to do anymore. It could be a form that is redundant or a process that is no longer necessary. Now is the time to evaluate best practices and eliminate unnecessary ones. A different form of action but one that's just as exciting!

Your input is important in this process. Your accreditation representative will be sharing information during your staff meetings about the standards your program will need to work on. Your suggestions and feedback will be invaluable as you work with your team to plan how you will meet the standards. The goals we are required to meet are clearly laid out by FOCUS but how we meet them is open to discussion. It's important that new ideas, processes and policies match our philosophies and our mission. It is equally important that everyone has an opportunity to be involved in the discussions. Make your voice heard!

CONTEST REMINDER

Just a reminder that the A-Team is looking for an accreditation logo and we need your help. There is still time to submit your entries. Please give them to Céline or your accreditation representative by July 18th. Winners will be announced in the July 24th newsletter.

