

M.A.D. Adventures

(Mainstream's Accreditation Dream)

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

Creative Thinking

Every job, no matter how challenging it may seem at first, falls into a fairly comfortable routine after a while. We know what we need to do and, barring any emergencies, we know what to expect when we walk into work every day. We can fall back on tried and true solutions to problems and take comfort in the routine.

Breaking out of that routine of thinking and doing can be a challenge. After a while, the solutions we have seem to be the only ones out there. The key to providing the best possible service is to stop thinking that way. There is always another perspective and another solution.

Domain 4 deals with families, friends and communities. FOCUS challenges us to look for better ways of supporting individuals to connect with friends and family as well as develop new relationships in the community. Every program across the agency tries to do that and there are some wonderful stories about how we helped someone reconnect with their family or make a new friend. These are real successes and we should be proud. The challenge is, how can we do better? How can we go from being support staff to becoming true community connectors? It's a different way of

thinking. Pushing ourselves to find creative solutions to everyday challenges can take some getting used to but it is so important in our quest to provide high quality service. Being community connectors means that we help increase someone's social capital and decrease their reliance on services. An example came out during a recent accreditation meeting. An individual living in an SL house wanted to go to a friend's house for dinner. It was challenging to support her because there was only one staff on in the evenings and they could not leave the house to drive her. A quick discussion yielded some great suggestions. Perhaps the individual could be supported to save her money for a taxi so that she could go on her own? Perhaps dinner at her friend's house could be booked in advance and Paratransit could be arranged? Either solution would help increase her independence and improve her quality of life. Isn't that what we are all about?

We are encouraging every team to look for ways to build community connections so that individuals can have more opportunities to develop healthy and meaningful relationships.

The challenge: let's become so effective at connecting people to their communities that our roles become redundant!

Agreeing to Accept

Listening to two people try to make a decision about something can be enlightening. The process of taking two different points of view and coming to a mutually agreeable decision can be a challenge. Personal interests, past experiences, current situations and even mood all play a role in the process. Furthermore, the more passionate they are about the issue, the harder it can be to compromise on it.

The A-Team is trying to do the exact same thing, only we have more than two opinions to consider. It's the entire agency! We have a lot of standards to meet and they touch on all aspects of service delivery. Different opinions, concerns and personal preferences can make for some pretty animated discussions. Not to mention the fact that each person is representing their own program or team as we work to find ways to meet each standard. Occasionally, the answers are simple. More often, they are not. When that is the case, discussion and dialogue help to identify potential challenges as well as generate possible solutions.

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At the end of the day, decisions have to be made. There are no perfect solutions but we will hopefully find ones that best meet the requirements of FOCUS and, most importantly, best meet the needs of the individuals that we support.

Agreement versus acceptance. When two people arrive at a decision, there is usually some give and take. They may not be in complete agreement with the final decision but they accept it as the best possible compromise. When an agency has to make a

decision, there will without a doubt be a lot of compromise. Not everyone will agree with every change and every decision and that's fine. What is important is that everyone has an opportunity to be heard should they choose to speak and that they have the chance to understand the rationale behind a decision.

We won't all agree but, if we keep communicating throughout this process, we will hopefully recognize that every change is a compromise and accept it as such.



Computers and Information Technology

They were not given their own domain but computers and information technology (IT) certainly should have been. There are all sorts of computer and IT-related standards that need to be met and they are scattered throughout our accreditation manual.

They've been collected together and it's quite a collection.

First of all, FOCUS wants us to develop a Technology Plan that details how we will address hardware, software, back-up systems, confidentiality, and security issues, among others.

We are becoming a computer dependent society and all sorts of challenges go along with that. More and more of our records are kept electronically and we need to ensure that all of our electronic documents adhere to privacy legislation. We need to develop a system for updating, transferring, and

destroying records. How will we protect records from damage, theft and destruction? All of these questions need to be answered so that we can develop and implement our Technology Plan.

Staff training is another goal. FOCUS wants us to provide training to all staff who use computers. As all staff have different computer needs, this training will probably need to be provided on an individual basis. How will we determine who needs what training and how will it be provided?

These are just some of the things will need to be thought about and resolved in the next few months. Eva, our resident computer expert has graciously agreed to help us through this process. Her knowledge will be invaluable. Look for updates on our progress in the months to come.