

M.A.D. Adventures

(Mainstream's Accreditation Dream)

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

Mission Accomplished!

Let's hear a huge round of applause for Mainstream! After 18 months of hard work, we have completed the work required to meet all 158 FOCUS accreditation standards. What's even more impressive is that we finished on schedule and managed to balance the challenge of meeting standards with the demands of our daily jobs.

Here are some of the highlights of the work that has been done across the agency.

Training weeks

In 2010, we will be testing out our new employee training system: training weeks! Rather than try to book training at various times throughout the year, we will be focusing our efforts on two weeks in January. It will be a time to renew mandatory training such as first aid, as well as stimulate agency-wide discussions about rights and communication and review key policies.

Person-Centred Planning

Every one of Mainstream's four programs now has a structured, person-centred planning process. The process is specific enough to ensure that it is consistently

implemented across the agency and yet flexible enough to ensure that the needs of each person using services can be met. No easy task!

Outcomes-Management Report

We will be conducting an annual agency-wide evaluation which is also a new practice here at Mainstream. This evaluation will take into consideration a wide variety of topics such as accessibility, employee satisfaction, feedback from people using services and stakeholders. The plan will serve as a guide for the upcoming year, help us focus our energy on areas that need improvement and allow us to clearly demonstrate progress from year to year.

Rights Council

On September 3rd, Mainstream's Rights Council had its first meeting. The council is made up of people using services and employees. The immediate goals of the council are to learn advocacy and problem solving skills. Ultimately, the council's goal is to be a place for people to bring their rights concerns to.

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The Next Step: On-Site Validation

Now that we have come up with ways of meeting each of FOCUS' 158 standards, we are moving on to the next step in the accreditation process: on-site validation.

On-site validation is when a team of individuals sent by FOCUS come to Mainstream for several days to observe how we operate. The team is made up of several peer validators and one lead validator. The lead is someone who has extensive experience in the field of developmental disabilities but who does not currently work in the field. Peer validators are people who work at agencies similar to Mainstream; they really are our peers. They may be employed by any developmental service agency in Ontario.

All validators have been trained in FOCUS' standards and will have reviewed all of our documentation before arriving on the scene. They will have a good idea of our different programs, our person-centred planning process and our policies.

When the validators arrive, their job is to observe us in action to ensure that our practices match with our policies.

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The members of the Rights Council are: Craig, Varsha, Al, Ellie, Jean, April, Tracie and Céline. Everyone on the council is excited to be a part of this new initiative.

Overall, accreditation has been a uniting force across the agency and a great opportunity to learn from each other. Every program has developed some very creative ways of doing things and of supporting people. In the past, this information would not typically be shared with other programs as there was not an

effective process of doing that. Well, for the past 18 months, we have had countless opportunities to share best practices, learn from each other and challenge each other to continuously improve.

Much of what this process has done is build accountability systems across the agency. These systems ensure that the changes we have made will continue well beyond the on-site validation. We are all better for it and should all be very proud of all that has been accomplished!

The Next Step: On-Site Validation

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Keep in mind that FOCUS will not be quizzing anyone on particular standards or specific policy details. No one needs to memorize the policy binder or the FOCUS manual. This is not a test! They will only be asking questions that are relevant to the person that they are talking to. Resource Centre employees will not need to answer questions about our financial department and Residential employees will not be asked questions about our fundraising protocols.

They will, on the other hand, be asking all sorts of questions about how we do things and everyone is expected to know how to do their jobs and explain what they do to others.

For example, they may visit one of our Supported Living homes and talk with the people who live there and the employees who support them. They may ask about the person-centred planning process and details about which goals have been worked on in the last year. They will ask about meal planning, community activities and medication administration. These things are part of daily activities in our Supported Living homes and everyone should be able to answer questions about them.

All parts of the agency will be evaluated. Margaret will be asked about finances and health and safety and Kris will be answering questions about fundraising practices and our Graffiti Removal Team. Kevin and the Board will be fielding questions about continuous quality improvement and governance. Noor will be addressing questions about hiring, orientation and other HR-related topics.

The next few months before FOCUS' arrival are about communication and discussion. Throughout the entire accreditation process, various means of communication have been used to help get the information out to those who need it. Newsletters contain a wealth of information and are an easy reference if you have any questions. Your accreditation representative will be helping to review information by bringing summaries of domains to your staff meetings. In the upcoming weeks, Céline will be attending staff meetings to answer questions.

The on-site validation is not something to be worried about. It's our opportunity to showcase our talents and the amazing services that we offer!