

Guidelines for Partnership between Program Leaders and Change Agents

How to maximize the effectiveness of the partnership between program change agents and program leadership (EDs, Program Directors, and Supervising Clinicians)

- The CCISC program is a program of quality improvement. As such, the program goals are to assess current program deficits and make corrective changes that will enable the team to provide improved services to consumers with co-occurring disorders. Training for CAs and staff is part of this process, but not sufficient. Knowledge of techniques and process can only provide change if it occurs in an infrastructure that allows and encourages the use of this knowledge. Thus, the CA needs to be aware of the quality improvement function she/he provides, and educate the leadership of this role. Correspondingly, leadership needs to be responsible for the QI process in the program, and attentive to the importance of the role of the CA as a partner in the process.
- CA's supervisor needs to approve the change agent's participation in the change agent program. Program leadership need to be certain that all levels within their program are in the loop. This is essential as supervisors need to have some understanding and buy-in regarding the initiative and the special role of the change agent. If the direct supervisor is not aware of the importance of the change agent's participation, he/she may not support the CA having the time needed to engage in the process.
- It's good for this reason to have documentation from the supervisor stating they approve their employee's participation in the program. If possible, it is highly encouraged that CAs and their supervisors have a discussion outlining the role of the CA, and how the CA will contribute to the program's change process, as well as expectations, including productivity requirements and accommodations. The change agent's role should be communicated to all the other staff in the program as well.
- The change agent must make sure that program leadership is well informed, and program leadership should plan regular time for this to occur, whether individually or in staff meetings. Change agents can help educate program leadership and other staff about the initiative, what is learned in quarterly meetings, and Steering Committee and Change Agent Cadre decisions, and should ask for time to present information discussed at change agent meetings, even the monthly meetings. The more informed a supervisor, the more engaged they'll be in the process, and the more likely they'll cooperate and encourage change agent activity.
- The change agent is a champion and change leader in the CCISC quality improvement program, but he/she is not responsible for the success of his or her program. It is the leadership of the program which ultimately holds the responsibility for the implementation of co-occurring capability in the CCISC process.
- Regular communication between change agents and program leadership is essential in order to have support in this program. If leadership doesn't know what the CAs are doing, they may not see the work as a priority. Weekly or bi-weekly meetings are useful, but not always possible in our fast-paced environment. If such meetings are not important, even brief check-ins, e-mails and notes builds good communication and goodwill. CAs could create a folder documenting communication with other staff and program leaders.