United for Families

Quality Management:

Independent Evaluation & System Improvement Plan

Submitted:
August 30, 2012
Executive Summary

On August 11, 2011, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was executed between United for Families and the Office of Family and Community Services at the Department of Children and Families (DCF) with an effective date of July 1, 2011, and which expired June 30, 2012\(^1\). The purpose of the MOA was as follows:

- To ensure that the state continues to remain in substantial conformity with federal and state requirements with Quality Assurance (QA) and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) systems that protect the safety, health, and welfare of children in care through formal reviews that address key practice areas and provide feedback on key findings;

- To provide for appropriate Quality Assurance (QA) activities consistent with state and federal laws; and

- To ensure appropriate oversight and accountability of Florida’s child welfare services continuum that includes prevention, diversion, and case management services provided to improve outcomes for children and families.

As part of the quality assurance, oversight, and accountability process, the department required an independent evaluation of child welfare practices and outcomes. The independent evaluation would be third-party evaluators from national child welfare organizations, accredited universities, or private-sector organizations (including peer-review evaluations) who have experience in child welfare. The evaluation had to include Quality Service Review (QSR) data and may include child welfare data from the Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN) and national accreditation reports, such as the Council on Accreditation (COA).

The annual evaluation would then be presented to the lead agency’s board of directors for the development of a local System Improvement Plan (SIP). The purpose of the SIP is to establish program priorities, define specific action steps to achieve improvement and establish goals for improvement. The SIP must be approved by the lead agency’s board of directors and shared with local community alliances or other structured community forums.

Evaluations/Audits/Reviews/Scorecards (External)

As the lead agency for child welfare services in Martin, St. Lucie, Indian River and Okeechobee Counties, United for Families is subject to a multitude of evaluations, audits and compliance reviews by external parties, which includes but is not limited to the following:

\(^1\) DCF has stated the MOA would not be renewed but parts of the agreement would be incorporated into the lead agency contract. The requirement for an “independent evaluation” will be eliminated.
✓ **Council on Accreditation** – national child welfare accreditation evaluation
✓ **Independent Financial Audit** – financial audit by certified public accounts
✓ **Auditor General Operational Audit** – operational audit of child welfare services
✓ **Office of Program Policy Analysis & Government Accountability (OPPAGA) Reviews** – legislative oversight and compliance with statutory requirements
✓ **Contract Oversight Unit Compliance Review** – DCF administrative and programmatic review of subcontractors
✓ **CBC Fiscal Oversight Unit Compliance Review** – DCF fiscal review of financial, procurement and subcontracting policies and procedures
✓ **Child Placing Agency Review** – DCF annual programmatic and administrative review of licensed child-placing agencies
✓ **CBC Scorecard** – DCF monthly ranking of lead agencies by 12 metrics on safety, permanency, well-being and administrative efficiency.

**Council on Accreditation**
United for Families is accredited by the national Council on Accreditation. COA accreditation is an objective and reliable verification of the quality of service delivered by human service organization. The COA accreditation process involves a detailed review and analysis of an organization’s administrative functions and service delivery practices. All are measured against international standards of best practice.

United for Families has spent the last eight (8) months being re-accredited and preparing for the final COA site review in September 2012. The re-accreditation process includes submitting all policies, procedures, strategic plans, system plans, services descriptions, etc., to the COA Pre-Commission Review Committee for independent evaluation and a final on-site evaluation by COA reviewers to validate adherence to standards.

**Independent Financial Audit**
United for Families’ Board of Directors engages an independent financial audit firm to perform an independent financial audit of the organization’s financial statements and express an opinion that financial statements have been presented fairly in all material respects. The independent audit process consists of the following stages:

✓ **Planning and risk assessment** – understanding the business processes, OMB A-133 compliance and audit risks
✓ **Internal Controls testing** – assess the operating effectiveness of segregation of duties, transaction authorizations and account reconciliations
✓ **Substantive procedures** – field-based evidence collection to validate processes and management’s assertions made in financial disclosures including substantive analytical procedures and substantive tests of detail
✓ **Finalization** – compiled management report and audit opinion
**Auditor General Operational Audits**
United for Families is complying with an operational audit of child welfare services being conducted by the Office of the Auditor General. The audit is focused on the Independent Living Transitional Services Program and also the foster care licensing process. Once the audit is complete, United for Families will incorporate any recommended actions or improvements into the System Improvement Plan.

**OPPAGA Reviews**
United for Families has participated in a variety of OPPAGA reviews which typically result in legislative changes or policy changes that drive practice improvements. The most recent reviews have focused on improvements to the Independent Living Program for children aging out of foster care.

**Contract Oversight Unit Compliance Reviews**
The Department of Children and Families established a Contract Oversight Unit (COU) in accordance with CFOP 75-8. The mission of the COU is “promoting accountability for service delivery”. The COU reviews each lead agency annually based on a scope of work established by the lead agency’s contract manager. The scope of work results in a charter typically comprised of key areas for programmatic and administrative review. These annual reviews are conducted on-site by a team of DCF staff for a period of 1-2 weeks. The results of the review are considered either “findings” or “recommendations” that must be rectified by a corrective action plan.

**CBC Fiscal Oversight Compliance Reviews**
The Department of Children and Families CBC Fiscal Unit performs on-site and desk reviews of lead agencies throughout the state. The results of the reviews are provided in “fiscal scorecards” and all “findings” or “recommendations” must be rectified by a corrective action plan.

**Child-Placing Agency Reviews**
The Department of Children and Families Regional Licensing Units perform annual reviews of all licensed child-placing agencies throughout the state. The results of the review are considered either “findings” or “recommendations” that must be rectified by a corrective action plan.

**CBC Scorecard**
In January 2012, the Department of Children and Families created a scorecard of 12 metrics related to safety, permanency, well-being and administrative efficiency. Although there currently is no contractual description of the scorecard, the results are reviewed frequently with senior-level officials at both the department and the lead agencies.

**QA/CQI/KPI (Internal)**
Additionally United for Families performs quality assurance (QA) and continuous quality improvement (CQI) activities on each part of the intricate and complex service delivery system. Key performance indicators (KPI) are monitored daily through a variety of methods including the following:

- **Quality Service Reviews** – self-evaluation protocol used to assess the effectiveness of practices and interventions provided to the families served
✓ **Quality of Practice Standards** – a comprehensive tool used for continual assessment of child welfare case management services
✓ **Internal Department Monitoring** – department reviews of compliance with policies and procedures.
✓ **Contract Monitoring** – administrative and programmatic reviews of subcontracted services
✓ **Local Improvement Plan** – analysis of performance measures and outcomes
✓ **Business Intelligence** – metrics and data mining
✓ **Provider Peer Reviews** – peer reviews and analyses by subcontractors
✓ **Ad Hoc Process Improvements** – process improvement initiatives from specific identified issues

**Quality Service Reviews/Quality Practice Standards**
United for Families’ Quality Management Department conducted twenty (20) Quality Services Reviews during FY 2011-12. The Quality Services Review (QSR) process helps child welfare and social services agencies assess the effectiveness of their practices, including interventions provided to the families they serve. The UFF Quality Management Department also conducted twenty-nine (29) Quality of Practice Standards (QPS) case reviews during fiscal year 2011-2012. During these reviews, QM utilized the QPS tool, which includes components of service process compliance which drive child and family outcomes, outcomes of service quality elements, and supervisory review processes. Both QSR and QPS cases were randomly selected using the criteria outlined in the “Windows into Practice” Guidelines for Quality Assurance and Continuous Quality Improvement in Child Welfare Service Delivery.

**Internal Department Monitoring**
United for Families’ Quality Management Department conducts internal reviews of all agency departments to validate compliance with operating policies and procedures. The results of internal department monitoring are submitted to the Senior Management Team for review and implementation.

**Contract Monitoring**
United for Families’ Quality Management Department follows a Decision Matrix provided by the UFF Contracts Department which assists in determining the frequency of annual monitoring for each client service provider. In order to maximize limited resources, minimize disruption to network providers, reduce duplicative monitoring activities and improve efficiencies, UFF integrates administrative, operational and programmatic elements to the greatest extent possible during its monitoring reviews through the utilization of varied evaluative sources.

**Local Improvement Plan**
United for Families’ Quality Management Department conducts quarterly meetings designed to assist in improving outcomes as related to annual performance measures and the Community Based Care scorecard. The improvement initiatives are developed based on root cause analysis resulting from poor performance and/or the need for continually improving performance. The plan lists local improvement initiatives including goals and methods of measurement, tracking, and analysis of possible root causes. The Quarter Performance Analysis Report/Local Improvement Plan is monitored monthly and submitted to the Department of Children and Families contract manager with updates quarterly. Ongoing status reports on performance improvement initiatives are communicated to management through agenda items in weekly Senior Management meetings. This information is captured and communicated to the board and interested stakeholders through monthly board and alliance meeting minutes.
**Business Intelligence**

Business intelligence is transforming data into knowledge and getting that knowledge to the people through a variety of channels so they can make informed decisions. United for Families has developed a business intelligence model designed to collect, mine and analyze data sets and produce dashboard-views of information for decision-making and ongoing evaluation. While much of the business intelligence is captured in reports, dashboards and system interfaces, the primary delivery channel is directly to the worker’s email (MetricMail) instructing them on exactly what is missing or what action needs to be completed based on pre-defined business rules.

**Provider Peer Reviews**

As part of self-evaluation processes for continuous quality improvement, our subcontracted agencies perform peer reviews of their services and programs. Case management agencies utilize the QSR/QPS standardized tools utilized by the lead agencies for monitoring the quality of services in dependency case management. Other agencies utilize service-specific review tools designed to evaluate the quality of each specific service delivered by their agency.

**Ad Hoc Process Improvements**

Because the oversight of the entire system of care is intricate and complex, specific issues arise which require swift action to correct or improve them. An example of an ad hoc process improvement initiative was reacting to substantial requirement changes by the court in St. Lucie County resulting in systemic process changes. This initiative required changes to standardized documents, standardized processes and the development of a complex court docket management system.

**System Improvement Plan**

The vast number of independent, external reviews combined with the multitude of internal quality assurance and continuous quality improvement processes result in the development of an improvement plan for the service delivery system. As previously stated, the purpose of the SIP is to establish program priorities, define specific action steps to achieve improvement and establish goals for improvement. The guiding principles in developing the SIP are as follows:

1. The goal of the system of care is to improve outcomes for children and families in the areas of safety, permanency and well-being.

2. The entire community is responsible for the welfare of children.

3. To be effective, the system must embrace the entire continuum of services, from prevention through after-care services.

4. Engagement with consumers and the community is vital to promoting safety, permanency and well-being.

5. Fiscal strategies must be considered that meet the needs identified in the system improvement plan.
6. Transforming the system is a process that involves removing traditional barriers between the child welfare system and other systems (e.g., health, education, developmental services, etc.) for integrated service delivery.

The SIP has been developed based upon these guiding principles, as well as the results and recommendations from both the external and internal evaluation processes previously described. The SIP has also been used to update the agency’s strategic plan and balanced scorecard.

External/Independent Results
The evaluations, audits and compliance reviews by external parties have resulted in the following recommendations or required actions to be addressed by the System Improvement Plan:

✓ **Council on Accreditation** – [final review in September 2012]
✓ **Independent Financial Audit** – no recommendations or corrective actions
✓ **Auditor General Operational Audit** – no recommendations or corrective actions
✓ **Office of Program Policy Analysis & Government Accountability (OPPAGA) Reviews** – no recommendations or corrective actions but program improvements made based on review
✓ **Contract Oversight Unit Compliance Review** – specific recommendations and corrective actions made including:
  o **Pre-Independent Living** – assessments, staffing, normalcy plans
  o **Independent Living** – life skills assessments, education/career paths
  o **Psychotropic Medications** – medication management, treatment plans, consent
  o **Mental Health Treatment Planning** – treatment plans for children
✓ **CBC Fiscal Oversight Unit Compliance Review** – no corrective actions but incorporate any recommendations into financial processes
✓ **Child Placing Agency Review** – no recommendations or corrective actions
✓ **CBC Scorecard** – no recommendations or corrective actions but performance measure analysis enhanced

Internal/QA/CQI Results
The internal reviews and analyses related to key performance indicators as part of the quality assurance and continuous quality improvement efforts have resulted in the following recommendations or required actions:

✓ **Quality Service Reviews/Quality of Practice Standards** – in-depth case reviews identified the following as areas needing improvement:
  o **Supervisory Reviews** – enhance supervisor review process
  o **Family Assessments** – address barriers that create quality and timeliness issues
  o **Parent Engagement** – continued focus on increasing the engagement of family members
  o **Placement/Education Stability** – if possible, children should be placed appropriately within their local community and continue to attend their local schools
  o **Communication between Case Participants** – poor communication a common theme among case participants
✓ **Internal Department Monitoring** – annual compliance reviews of internal department compliance with policies and procedures identified the following as opportunities for improvement:
  o *Program Services* – independent living file compliance
  o *Data Management* – electronic file check-out process (N/A – electronic files)
  o *Clinical Services* – perceptions of Team One “manager”, role clarification of Team One members, recommendations resulting in action by case managers, physical location barriers of team members
  o *Training & Accreditation* – improve process of personal development plans
  o *Outreach* – none identified
  o *Finance* – [N/A – independent audit]
  o *Human Resources* – update employee handbook, job descriptions and policies as needed
  o *Legal* – update terminology in applicable policy and procedures

✓ **Contract Monitoring** – annual monitoring of subcontracted providers identified the following as areas needing improvement:
  o Real-time monitoring of specific residential contract components
  o Enhancements to the contract monitoring process with the passage of HB 5305
  o Collection of service providers’ performance measures data

✓ **Local Improvement Plan** – root-cause analysis identified the following as areas needing improvement:
  o Continual efforts to improve on Performance Measure 301 – Percent of Children Reunified within 12 Months of the Latest Removal
  o Continual efforts to improve on Performance Measure 302 – Percent of Children Removed within 12 Months of a Prior Reunification
  o Continual efforts to improve on Performance measure 306 – Percentage of Children in Out-of-Home Care 8 Days-12 Months with Two or Fewer Placements

✓ **Business Intelligence** – metric reports, dashboards and systems development including:
  o *MetricMail* – email notifications of tasks to achieve performance compliance
  o *Dashboard* – intranet gauges on performance measures (redesigning)
  o *MailLab* – web-based survey campaign system
  o *uQuery* – unlimited queries/reporting on data extracts

✓ **Provider Peer Reviews** – provider self-reviews identified the following:
  o The importance of establishing inter-rater reliability among case management reviewers – Ongoing training with case management on the QSR and the QPS tool
  o Need for quality improvement initiatives implemented by the case management provider agencies
  o Quarterly updates by the case management agencies

✓ **Ad Hoc Process Improvements** – process improvement initiatives from specific identified issues such as:
  o *Docket Management System* – web-based court process management system (uDocket)
  o *Referral Management System* – web-based service referral system (uRefer)
  o *Education Management System* – web-based data exchange with school systems (uEducate)
- Critical Incident Management System – web-based incident reporting and analysis (uReport)
- Psychotropic Medication Management System – web-based medication management (uRx)
- CBHA Referral Management System – web-based system for managing comprehensive behavioral health assessments (uAssess)
- Case Transfer System – web-based system for managing ESI/case transfer process (uTransfer)

Any additional external or internal reviews resulting in identification of opportunities for improvement will be incorporated into the SIP which will be completed annually by October 30th of each fiscal year.
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