

DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



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June 22, 2009

TO: Sandra Erickson, Board Chair
Priscilla Halcro, HBCS Director
Merlin Gilham, CEO

FROM: Lori Wertz, QIS

SUBJECT: Home Based Services Review--FY09

The following should serve as annual summary of your HBS programs for the FY 09 ending June 30, 2009. It is based on the onsite file review, home visits throughout this past year as well as reports and information submitted by your agency.

I would like to again extend my personal appreciation to each of the staff in this department. Without exception and even as busy as they are, each one of them at any point this year has stopped to help with systems changes, referrals, eligibility and other issues too numerous to name. Thank-you!

As always, if you have any questions, comments or concerns, please do not hesitate to call me. In the meantime, I look forward to the privilege of working with Home Based Services this coming year.

cc: file
DDP/Central Office

NATIONAL ACCREDITATION REPORTS:

Accreditation is no longer required by the State and QLC no longer uses accreditation as part of their children's services program.

CONSUMER SATISFACTION SURVEYS:

The agency consistently uses consumer surveys and results are routinely shared with the Regional Office. Specific comments for this fiscal year can be found in the contractor's file. Family concerns regarding the changes in the DD system and related changes by the State, specific to respite, were concerns for families. As in previous years, there was much praise for individual staff persons, for the level of support and knowledge exhibited by Family Support Specialists and for the overall assistance and support available to families through the various children's programs.

FSSAC PARENT REPRESENTATIVE INPUT:

The parent representative for FSSAC is also a QLC employee. Her input will be added to this report upon receipt. **Update July 13, 2009, FSSAC Parent Representative Laurie Frank would like to add the following comments as noted by email date June 29, 2009:** I would like to add that we continue to strive for more funding for Part C so that we can serve **all** the children in Part C services and are continuing to advocate for more funding for those kiddos who show the need for services after the age of three. I would like to see the state provide more funding to allow agencies to hire more staff to decrease the caseloads of the FSS's. I am pleased with the services that I receive for my daughter and am happy with the progress she has made. Laurie Frank FSSAC Parent Rep Region 2.

HOME VISITS/FAMILY CONTACTS:

Home visits have occurred consistently over the past year in Children's Autism Waiver, Part C, FES, limited and IFES (now Children's Waiver) and personal visits have generally reflected the same topics noted in the consumer satisfaction surveys (see above).

INTERNAL MONITORING SYSTEMS:

Internal monitoring is a strength for the Children's programs at QLC. The agency has moved to a more streamlined supervisory structure with one supervisor each to cover Shelby, Havre, the Autism waiver, Great Falls and in response to family needs and concerns, one for hab aides. The HBS program is invested in their families and makes changes based on input from stakeholders that include QLC staff, parents, schools and state staff. Mistakes are corrected and safeguards are put in place to reduce recurrence. The forthright and honest communication from the HBS staff to the Regional and Central Offices are respectful even if in a disagreement and the staff ability to compromise to do what needs to be done for consumer's and their families is much appreciated.

The HBS staff continue to have trained investigators under the state Incident Management policy and through that system, follow State investigation and reporting policy. HBS staff have implemented the policy across all services (not just waiver) and consistently notify the Regional Office as required by policy. This is a repeated statement from the previous review. Many agencies in the state have self reported that they have not fully implemented this policy in this fashion and staff in this program are to be commended for fully embracing the incident management program while understanding and working toward a better policy that makes more sense to families and children living in natural environments.

DOCUMENTATION OF PRAISE OR COMPLAINTS:

No formal complaints were received by the Regional Office regarding children's services this past fiscal year. As previously noted, there were some informational questions that were deferred to the agency for resolution or were discussed and resolved in the Regional Office. Questions, comments or concerns included: individual cost plan related issues (access to crisis dollars, need for additional funding), timeframes (concern about the time from cost plan approval to delivery of specific line items in the cost plan and how that process worked), respite (the use

of non-employee respite providers) was a huge issue that generated multiple calls to the agency, regional and central offices, and the disallowance of non-waiver allowable expenses (the purchase of a home or remodeling of a home due to water damage, barimetric treatments, and requests that would normally fall under a family's responsibility for the care and safety of their children).

Praises for the HBS program are numerous and the bond between Family Support Specialists is apparent. The staff in this program retain a high profile in their communities (Autism walk, Safe Kids, Story Maker, Positive Peers, Challenger Baseball, E& D Clinics through Full Circle, as well as many other programs and support groups) and it is not unusual to get referrals from not only medical and outreach programs, but from yard sales and grocery stores as well.

ECO data, as compiled by the DDP Central Office, again this year showed high percentages of compliance. This level of excellence has been noted consistently in the last several evaluation cycles. This is a time consuming activity that provides necessary data for the State Performance Plan and Child Count. Staff are to be commended for their assistance in this process.

LICENSING INFORMATION

QLC has no foster placements at this time.

FINANCIAL AUDITS:

The HBS program has an audit in progress at this moment. Results will be included with next fiscal year's review. It can be noted that there have been no concerns regarding dollars related to children's expenditures noted in this past year and purchases related to children are documented and appear to be appropriate by audit standards.

The HBS Fiscal Coordinator remains a strength for this department as well. This year has again brought challenges to the billing system and cost plans that have created significant differences in both process and philosophy from past years. Having a Fiscal Coordinator who not only keeps up with the changes but juggles multitudes of questions from many different venues is very much appreciated.

FSS CERTIFICATIONS:

HBS currently has 19 comprehensively certified Family Support Specialists with three provisional certification.

The agency did add an Family Support Specialist Assistant (FSSA) this year who has been of great benefit in both work load and efficiency for the FSS position. It also must be noted that the retirement of a long time and invaluable employee is expected in August. Bobbie Bevars has been an Intake Coordinator, FSS and all round encyclopedia of knowledge and family contact for many years and her skills and abilities will leave a huge footprint to be filled.

CRISIS RESPONSE:

Crisis can happen to any family and in any service, but often crisis is noted in the most intensive funding program (Children's Waiver). This past year, HBS staff assisted in the placement of a young man to adult services who was in a very difficult situation. The young man had some developmental disability but significant mental health issues which later made it unfortunately necessary to place him in an institution. The staff were instrumental in providing adult services providers with an accurate portrayal of the young man's needs as well as advocating to their utmost in order to gain him placement and opportunities for success in his community. In another situation, a family whose house was heavily damaged by water would be without a home still if not for the persistent advocacy of their FSS who was influential in contacting multiple people and agencies to assist in a home ownership program that would meet the family need. In yet another situation, ongoing APS involvement, and conflicts between the school, parent and child provided another

opportunity for a stressful and difficult crisis situation that needed to be balanced between the child/family and services provided.

HBS staff generally work closely with the Regional Office when crisis presents itself and appropriately request risk pool dollars or assistance in advocating for out of home placements. Updated referrals are a lynchpin of the current screening process, and although the screening rule is in draft at this writing, we might be able to find a more efficient and streamlined method of updating referrals. I would be most happy to help in this endeavor.

FILE REVIEW:

Files were reviewed in accordance with the November 2003 version of Montana Evaluation Process for Family Education and Support Services. The sample included files from FES, Part C and IFES as well as children who exited Part C and those in transition to other services. Files document consistent use of multi-dimensional assessments, medical information and parental observations which determine the course of the IFSPs.

Once again, there were NO significant issues to report as a result of the file review. The one recommendation issued at the last review involved transition and whether families were referred for other appropriate services/agencies. Current file review showed improvement and notation of referral to specific agencies in this regard.

The attached table and Quality Assurance Observation Sheets reflect the overall findings for Home Base Services.

OTHER INFORMATION:

Advent of the Children's Autism Waiver has created an exciting and sometimes overwhelming addition of services and requirements. The E&C staff through QLC have done an amazing job of setting appointments, completing screenings, assessments and reports to a large number of children in a very short amount of time. Keep up the good work! The review process for the Autism Waiver could not be completed with this cycle of review as the process itself is still being devised. However, individual consumer data, programs, progress and contacts were reviewed and show an amazing amount of creativity, attention to detail and commitment to the kids involved in this program. Thank-you!

As expressed in the past, it continues to be my pleasure to work with the HBS program at QLC. Thank-you for your time, your energy and your daily reminders of why we work in the field of Human Services.