2010

Improving Organizational Practices: Learning from Direct Care Staff and Team Leads

Abigail Helget
Minnesota State University - Mankato

Follow this and additional works at: https://cornerstone.lib.mnsu.edu/etds

Part of the Clinical and Medical Social Work Commons, and the Social Work Commons

Purpose of Project

The purpose in completing this needs assessment was to pinpoint inconsistencies or unclear aspects of the direct care provided to clients served by H.S.I. staff. This understanding can then assist H.S.I. in providing the necessary support for direct care staff and also allow for H.S.I to provide more adequate support for their clients. All information gathered from the focus groups will be disseminated to support departments and Team Leads through a written report. Based upon these results H.S.I. may choose to implement new or revised trainings, conduct meetings or enact companywide policies.

Literature Review

Completing a needs assessment for in home and foster care services is an imperative aspect to providing effective and competent care for individuals. It is a targeted way to assist in providing services that both currently exist and in providing new services for individuals. It is particularly important in establishing priorities for what needs to be addressed in the future (McCaslin & Tibezinda, 1998).

One way to conduct a needs assessment initially is through focus groups. The use of focus groups is an effective qualitative way to collect evaluative data for an organization. Through focus groups one can gain insight into an organization from key informants in a group or organization (Rubin & Babbie, 2008).

More than one focus group is best practices when conducting research. Completing only one focus group for a research study is risky, in that it provides too little data to be generalizable (Rubin & Babbie, 2008). Depending on the needs of the research study, the number of focus groups will depend on the depth and number done. A key feature of focus group data is the importance it plays in the formative stage of an organizational process. Focus groups can be used to formulate ideas for further research that can be done with more systematic qualitative and quantitative methods (Mattessich, 2003).

Methodology

Prior to conducting the focus groups a literature review was conducted regarding how to conduct a needs assessment. After careful analysis the use of a grounded qualitative method was proposed. The method most adequate to serve the purposes of this research was a focus group.

Two focus groups were conducted addressing three different subject matters. The subject matters include, inconsistencies is direct care practice, origin of inconsistencies and improvement strategies for these inconsistencies. The focus groups were split between Team Leads and Direct Support Professionals. Those that were eligible to participate were Direct Support Professionals (DSP's) Team Lead Assists (TLA's) and Team Leads (TL's) in the Mankato and New Ulm areas.

Upon gathering the date a qualitative data analysis was completed. The information that was gathered underwent thematic analysis. This thematic analysis was then written into a report and disseminated to various stakeholders in H.S.I. They were provided both with a full written report and executive summary. The report included a list of recommendations based upon the information gathered.

MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY MANKATO

Improving Organizational Practices: Learning from direct care staff and team leads

Abigail Helget
Habilitative Services Inc
Department of Social Work
Minnesota State University, Mankato

Participant Profile Information

Sample Size	Gender	Age of Participants	Population of Clients
8 Participants	Female-*100% (8)*	18-25: *0%*	Disability: 50% (4)
2 DSP	Male-*0%*	26-40: *25% (2)*	SPMI: 50% (4)
3 TLA		41-64: *62.5% (5)*	TBI: 25% (2)
3 TL		65-up: *12.5% (1)*	

Data/Results

In each of the three topic areas discussed themes were developed resulting from the information discussed during the focus groups. The various ideas that were presented were put under these larger themes. Each theme encompassed many different aspects of direct care practices. The following are a list of results based upon the topics discussed during the focus groups.

What is unclear or confusing in direct care practices:
Client History:
Continuity of Care:
What type of access do we have with other professionals?
Confusion with IHP or RMAP
Role Confusion
Medication Confusion

Origin of Confusion
Lack of Communication
Lack of Training.
Lack of access to others
Lack of continuity of care
Lack of buy-in from staff.

Recommendations to improve practices
More training hours
More resource availability
More in-class training
More compensation or praise to staff
Additional communication opportunities
Additional clarification

Strengths and Limitations

There were a number of strengths and limitations to the study . Due to the use of focus groups the process was inexpensive and a lot of data was available in a short period of time. The focus group allowed for an open dialogue, group dynamics and open ended questioning that help the research gain important insight into the topic at hand. Finally, since there was no need for extensive training in conducting the research there is a possibility that this process could be repeated multiple times in the future.

There were also limitations to the study. First, the population studied were all female. Although this field is dominated at this time by female staff, there are still a large number of male staff that are working in this field. Second, the study size was remarkably small given the large number of spots that were open for participation (a total of 40). Finally, a true needs assessment would include input from all stakeholders in the company.

Conclusions & Recommendations

The purpose of conducting these focus groups was to gain insight regarding ways to provide direct care in a more competent and effective way. The research was focused on formulating new ideas rather than measuring specific information. These new ideas that were formulated have much potential for the company.

Findings from the research brought to light a number of different issues that direct care staff are experiencing. Some of the main concerns from staff involved continuity of care from site to site and managing the large amount of information that are required for optimum job performance. Also, staff felt they did not have adequate knowledge about how to gain information in situations in which they are confused or lack the information necessary. Staff wanted more opportunities for training including in-class trainings. The perceived origin of these issues were a lack of training, access to others and consistency again, from site to site or home to home. As a result a list of recommendations to remedy these issues was presented. They ranged from paying staff more to having a forum for staff to interact with one another. A great deal of time was spent discussing the need for in class trainings and more resources within the home to help staff answer their lingering questions about how to provide direct care.

In the future it would be recommended that H.S.I. complete a more thorough needs assessment. This would include additional focus groups with various stakeholders in the company. It would also be recommended that a different recruitment strategy be utilized in recruiting participants. Following this additional needs assessment, H.S.I. could use information gathered to make changes or provide new opportunities in the company.

Implications for Practice

The information gleaned from these focus groups encompassed many different concepts. Due to its exploratory nature the information provides some insight into what subject matters may need to be looked into further. The results are not meant to be an exhaustive list of possible concerns but rather a stepping stone for further research. The themes presented could be used in additional research utilizing other types of qualitative or quantitative research.

Completing an evidence based needs assessment is a long and labor intensive process. It should be completed by offering the opportunity for all stakeholders to be able to participate. When a needs assessment is completed it is imperative that a social service agency use the information to provide effective and evidence based services to the individuals that they serve.

References

For a complete list of references please see poster presenter.