Jewish Child and Family Services

Program Specification Process

Contents

Program Specification Process Agenda

- Initially, three half-days, of 4-5 hours each, are scheduled to cover the program and service specification process. (This time frame may be more or less depending on the program size, needs and specification goals.)
- To begin the process, all material relating to the program (*this is listed as Reference Material at the beginning of each day's agenda)* is collected and reviewed by facilitators prior to the first day.
- The program specification group ideally includes representative staff from all professional disciplines and perspectives relevant to day-to-day program functioning.

Day	**Time Frame and Agenda**	
Day 1	20 minutes	Introduction to Program and Service Specification Process: Goals and Rationale
		Overview of 3-day Agenda
	2 hours	Client and System Conditions
	10 minutes	Break
	1 ½ hours	Major Program Components: Part 1
Day 2	20 minutes	Review material completed from Day 1
	2 hours	Major Program Components: Part 2 Program Processes and Activities and Service Providers
	10 minutes	Break
	1 ½ hours	Theory and Philosophy of Program
Day 3	20 minutes	Review Material from Day 2
	1 ½ hours	Outcomes and Expected Results Measures and Indicators
	10 minutes	Break
	1 ½ hours	Evaluation Plan and CQI processes
	30 minutes	Wrap-up: Assign and plan final tasks to create final draft of material from the 3-day process: ♦ Program narrative for service components ♦ Program snapshot ♦ Evaluation Plan
	Set up next meeting time to review and edit the final draft of the Program Specification process and review questions related to ensuring that the program logic is sound.	

Day 1: Introduction to Program and Service Specification Process

Program Specification is a process that outlines and defines all aspects of program functioning. The process results in a narrative description and a graphical representation of program functioning, otherwise know as a logic mode. The following general areas are examined in detail during the program specification process:

Client and system conditions: demographic information about clients served, needs, strengths, and deficits of the target population, how clients are identified and referred, and eligibility requirements. Also included are constraints on the program, such as laws, regulations, and funding requirements.
Inputs: resources dedicated to or consumed by the program (e.g. money, staff and staff time, facilities, equipment and supplies).
Activities: what the program does with the inputs to achieve program goals and expected client outcomes. Activities include services provided, strategies, and techniques.
Outputs: direct products of program activities, typically measured in terms of the volume of work accomplished (e.g. numbers of classes taught, therapy sessions conducted, educational materials distributed, clients served).
Outcomes: benefits for clients during or after their involvement with a program. Outcomes may relate to knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, behavior, condition or status. For a particular outcome there can be various *levels* of outcomes, with initial outcomes leading to longer-term ones.
Indicators: observable, measurable characteristics or changes that can be tracked to evaluate achievement of an expected outcome.
Benchmarks: numerical objectives for a program's level of achievement or expected outcomes.

Goals of Program and Service Specification Process
Clarify and understand:

- Target population
- Client and system conditions
- Program activities
- Expected client outcomes

Program Planning, Evaluation and CQI

- Meet expectations and standards for licensing, accreditation, and funding sources
- Identify evaluation questions and information needs
- Identify collection tools and processes
- Develop reporting format and process
- Develop program performance standards and annual program goals
- Implement ongoing quality improvement and program evaluation process

Staff Development

- Reach consensus on program functioning with managers and staff
- Identify professional staff development and training needs

Day 1: Client and System Conditions

Reference material for this section:

- Current Program Specification Documentation
- Contract requirements
- Client eligibility requirements
- Presenting issues
- Baseline data

1. Why are we providing the service? What problems does the program address?
2. Who is served? What are their needs and strengths? How many individuals and families are in need of the service? Who does the contract say will be served? What issues and/or needs bring people to the program?
3. How are the clients identified? What are the referral streams by which clients come into the agency?
4. What are the acceptance criteria or eligibility requirements? Are these preventing clients from getting needed services? Is the service voluntary?
5. What are the payment/funding sources for the program?
6. Are there service gaps within the delivery system? Are other agencies providing a similar service? Are clients able to access this service in their own community? If not, why not?
7. Does the agency or program have any baseline demographic data? What demographic issues will likely have an impact on the program functioning?

Day 1: Inputs and Activities

Make note of any updates to reference material for this section:

- Funder/contract requirements
- Regulations: Federal, state, local
- Standards: COA accreditation and best practice
- Data regarding how staff time is spent

1. What are the program inputs?
2. What are the activities of the program?
3. What treatment modalities are used?
4. What treatment approaches are used?
5. How long is the service provided? Who provides the service? How many clients will be served?
6. How is a unit of each service defined (e.g. time, task)? What constitutes the minimum and maximum service?
7. What program components or activities are mandated by contract? By licensing standards? By accreditation standards?

Day 2: Program Philosophy & Theory

Reference material for this section:

- Contract(s)
- Mission and vision materials
- Values
- Theory of change
- Treatment or program model(s) used

1. What are the beliefs that underpin the service?
2. What are the models that underpin the service?
3. How was the model for this program developed? What theory and/or research findings support this program model?
4. What is the theory of change embedded in the service model? In other words, how do program activities bring about desired client change?

Day 3: Client Outcomes

Reference material for this section:

- Contract requirements
- Federal, state and local expectations
- Outcome targets
- Benchmark data
- Quality Improvement targets
- COA Standards

1. What will the clients gain from the services provided by the program?
2. What is the program trying to accomplish? What are the primary goals of the program?
3. If the program reached its highest level of success, what would the clients look like (e.g. what knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors would clients exhibit)?
4. Over what time period would results occur?
5. Have funders set program performance standards? Are there internal program standards that apply to this client group?
6. Are there outcomes specific to an identified client different from those for other family group members? What indirect gains are anticipated from the program?
7. How many and what percent of clients are expected to achieve the results?
8. How do achieved outcomes address the needs identified in the condition section?
9. How do the short-term gains differ from the long-term gains? What gains will the clients maintain after the service has been completed? Will other indirect gains be achieved after the program is implemented successfully?

Day 3: Program evaluation and Program Logic

Points for development of a program evaluation plan:

1. Develop indicators for each expected outcome.
2. Identify data sources and measures (include inputs, outputs and outcomes).
3. State program standards.
4. Review feasibility of evaluation plan.
5. Develop and specify reporting format and schedule.

Is the Program logic sound?

1. How are program activities connected to the identified needs described in the condition sections?
2. How are the activities connected to the desired outcomes?
3. Does the logic model represent how the program really works?
4. How does the program reflect the agency's mission and values?
5. How feasible is the program? Given the available resources, is there a clear link between clients, program, environmental conditions and intended results?
6. Does this program achieve the anticipated results?

Program Logic Model

Client, Family and System Conditions	Activities	Outputs	Initial outcomes	Long term outcomes

Outcome Data Worksheet

Outcome	Indicator	Data Source	Data collection method

References

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